

**Report on the Second KIMS-CNA Conference:  
“The PLA Navy’s Build-up and ROK-USN Cooperation”**  
Held in Seoul, Korea on 20 November 2008

Michael A. McDevitt

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Approved for distribution:

February 2009



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## **Report on the KIMS-CNA Conference**

### ***“The PLA Navy’s Build-up and ROK-USN Cooperation”***

**Seoul, Korea**

**20 November 2008**

#### **Background**

The second CNA-Korean Institute of Maritime Strategy (KIMS) workshop on ROK Navy and US Navy cooperation was held in Seoul, Korea, on 20 November 2008. The primary objective of this institutional collaboration is to assist in improving the working relationship between the US Navy and the Republic of Korea Navy. The concept is to provide a Track II venue where retired and serving officers from both navies, along with civilian experts, can meet in an unofficial atmosphere that permits a candid exchange of views on strategic outlooks and shared interests associated with the maritime domain.

This conference is a specific deliverable associated with the CNA project entitled “KIMS-CNA Track II Conference Series,” sponsored by Commander Pacific Fleet. The intent is to use this conference series as one approach toward assisting the ROK Navy in its transition from a coastal defense orientation to more of a regional blue-water focus. The Track II venue permits the two naval establishments to engage in a maritime strategic dialogue that will become increasingly important as the scheduled 2012 transfer of wartime OPCON of forces in Korea, and concomitant disestablishment of Combined Forces Command, approaches. This transfer will affect naval command relationships that have been in place for 20 years. Maintaining an effective strategic dialogue is particularly important at this time as the ROK Navy emerges as a bona-fide blue-water force with impressive capabilities.

#### **The Conference**

The conference was a great success on two counts: first, because over 300 people attended, it provided a highly visible demonstration within South Korea that ROKN-USN cooperation is ongoing, viable and focused on issues beyond the defense of the ROK; and second, it illustrated the high degree of interest that Seoul has in the topic of the PLA Navy.

Admiral An, the retired ROKN CNO who heads KIMS, was delighted with the large turnout, which was by far the largest crowd that KIMS has ever assembled for a conference. The choice of the topic was KIMS to make, since they were the hosts for this

iteration of the series. It is worth noting that following the first meeting in Honolulu in the summer of 2007 the tentative topic was “The 1000 ship navy/global fleet partnership.” However, after returning to Korea, the KIMS team asked to change its focus to the PLA Navy. Given the interest in this topic generated, this was a good call on their part. It was also a revealing one—revealing in the sense that it highlights the uncertainty that many in the ROK security establishment have about China’s military modernization. The conference agenda is attached to this report, as are the six papers (three ROK, three US).

The audience was a mix of retired ROK officers from all services, active duty ROKN officers, and Korean academics from other think tanks as well as universities. Understandably, US presence was modest. Aside from the CNA delegation, RDML Tom Rowden, COMNAVFORK, and members of his staff attended, as did Commander Jerry Boster from the US Pacific Fleet staff (N5).

Rather than attempting to summarize presentations and the discussion areas seriatim, the balance of this report is organized around issues raised in the ROK papers, the questions raised during the proceedings, and the side-bar conversations held during the course of the event.

## **Issues**

### **Strategic Flexibility of US forces in Korea**

In 2004, DoD (OSD-P) tabled a Future of the Alliance Initiative that included the idea that U.S. forces in the ROK would be repostured, trained, and equipped so they could be employed in missions that were regional, or even global, in nature rather than simply being focused on defense of the Korean peninsula. Expanding the potential role of U.S. forces stationed in Korea beyond defending the ROK became a major issue in Korea because it raised the possibility that those forces could become involved in conflicts that were counter to the interests of the ROK—especially a Taiwan crisis with China.

From Washington’s perspective, this issue was resolved in 2006 during the first strategic dialogue meeting between the U.S. and ROK governments when Washington officially acknowledged its sensitivity to Seoul’s concerns about unwilling or involuntary involvement in U.S. crises or military activity beyond the Korean peninsula. While Americans may consider the problem solved, the conference highlighted that it remains a sensitive issue in Seoul because of ongoing concerns about Chinese perceptions regarding the apparent expansion of the U.S.-ROK Alliance beyond the defense of South Korea. Two of the papers made clear that the Chinese have voiced concerns to ROK interlocutors that “strategic flexibility” is simply a euphemism that cloaked either direct involvement of USFK in the containment of China or in a Taiwan crisis. As a result, the ROK feels it “needs to ease concerns” in China over the expansion of the U.S.-ROK Alliance beyond the immediate defense of South Korea.

The main policy implication is that the ROK and ROKN are acutely sensitive to Chinese reactions to anything that might be construed as being counter to the security interests of China. As a result, USN interlocutors need to remain sensitive to the fact that any initiatives the United States advances will be analyzed by its ROK counterparts from this perspective.

## **OPCON Shift**

We encountered two different perspectives on the scheduled wartime OPCON shift of ROK forces from U.S. to ROK command that is to take place on April 17, 2012. The Koreans refer to this as the “Koreanization of Korean Defense.”

Those in ROK retired community remain opposed to this because they see the shift from “one command, two nations” to “two commands, two nations” as dangerous. They think that it violates the principle of unity of command, and that it is the first step in the U.S. backing away from a defense commitment. In other words, they have a fear of abandonment. Because they can speak more freely, the retirees are hoping that somehow this decision will be revisited—or at least put on hold. The January 2009 saber rattling by North Korea toward the South will also reinforce the second of the retiree’s concerns—i.e., that the North Korean threat has not gone away and that until it has South Korea and the United States would be foolish to disestablish CFC.

The other perspective is from the ROKN active duty community, which has to make this work and is focusing on planning and process issues. But even active duty officers worry that the shift in OPCON from CFC to the ROK military will inevitably mean a shift from “institutional cooperation” toward “selective cooperation,” in which political factors become more predominant. Their concern is that it weakens alliance cooperation at the strategic level at a time when it should be strengthened because of the rise of China.

## **The ROK’s Strategic Dilemma**

ROK strategic thinking, at least as manifested at this conference, recognizes that the ROK must pursue a “balanced strategy” which does not neglect relations with China. For reasons of geography, history, culture and growing economic connections our ROKN panelists argued that the most important strategic challenge in ROK security strategy would be achieving “harmony between the ROK-U.S. alliance and the ROK-China strategic partnership.”

The ROKN is aware that Beijing will continue to pressure the ROK about its U.S. alliance. For example, at the May 2008 ROK-China Summit, which established a Strategic Partnership between Seoul and Beijing, China’s foreign ministry spokesman said, “The ROK-U.S. alliance is a relic of past history.” He went on to suggest that since it was formed in the Cold War and was a military alliance it is inadequate to cope with the urgent global and regional problems of Northeast Asia. The ROK military feels the

pinch of trying to “ease concerns of China over the strengthening of the ROK-U.S. alliance,” and as a result thinks it needs to develop further its bilateral relationship with China by increasing cooperation in all areas, including the military arena. As ROK officers see it, their objective is “to make China friendly to the ROK and, at the same time, cooperative towards the ROK-U.S. alliance.”

The issue for USN interlocutors will be to understand the strategic bind that Seoul finds itself in while remaining alert to the fact that interactions may have to be handled with greater circumspection. Happily, the ROKN still sees the USN as its modern “founding father” and earnestly seeks USN help in thinking through its evolution to a blue-water force. It is incumbent on the U.S. side to handle the ROK strategic dilemma deftly so that a trustworthy bond between the two naval establishments remains in place in the future.

### **The “History War” With China**

A “history war” between China and Korea has been raging for at least a decade. One of the most neuralgic issues between China and South Korea (and perhaps North Korea as well) involves what China calls its “Northeast Project,” which Koreans believe is an attempt to hijack Korean history and incorporate it into China’s own. The fight is over the legacy of the Kingdom of Koguryo, as the Koreans refer to it, or Gaogouli, as the Chinese call it.

The Kingdom of Koguryo existed from the 1st century B.C. to 668 A.D. At its height, under the Emperor Gwanggaeto the Great, (not coincidentally, the name of the lead ship of the ROK Navy’s KDX 1 class destroyers), it controlled a significant section of Northeast Asia, including territory that is now part of South Korea, North Korea, and China. From a Korean historical vantage point, it has long been considered one of the Three Kingdoms of Korea, a major wellspring of Korean civilization and culture.

However, according to China, Gaogouli is historically *Chinese*--an assertion that outrages Korea. Dating back to at least 1980, Chinese claim that Gaogouli is an integral part of the historical concept of “China.” Koreans scoff at such assertions, and make counter accusations that describe Chinese historical revisionism as motivated by claims on Korean territory. They argue the Chinese interpretation does not hold water; they say that it is a clear political attempt to provide legitimacy for current Chinese borders by pretending that everything *currently* part of China has *always* been part of China.

At the conference, one paper argued that it is a mistake to dismiss this as an academic issue. In fact, in 1996 a PRC government sponsored campaign was ratified in the name of the Politburo Standing Committee by none other than Hu Jintao. From an ROK perspective, the political rationale for the history war are the 2 million ethnic Koreans in China’s Northeast provinces, and China’s fear that a reunited Korea could lay claim to what the Koreans call the “Gando” region which includes much of present day Manchuria.

Awareness of this dispute over history is important to keep in mind, since it introduces elements of both outrage and suspicion into how the Koreans think of China, and relates directly to the issue of China's continued support of the North Korean regime.

### **Chinese Intervention in a North Korean Collapse Scenario.**

Perhaps the most surprising issue to surface during the conference was the candor that ROKN officers used in discussing their planning assumption that in case North Korea collapsed the Chinese would intervene. They assume that China would be an obstacle in the process of reunifying of the Korean peninsula in that "China would almost certainly try to intervene to sustain North Korea as a buffer zone." They believe that the survival of the North Korean regime is at the top of China's security agenda because the establishment of a pro-Western (read "pro-U.S.") regime "would not be a good situation for China." They even suggest that China could interfere with ROK-U.S. operations in the Yellow Sea (West Sea to the Koreans) in case of a North Korean contingency.

The ROKN is planning for a North Korean regime collapse. It recognizes that there will be interactions between the PLAN and ROKN in the Yellow Sea as large numbers of refugees trying to escape from North Korea will take to the sea.

The need to coordinate on refugees and on problems of illegal fishing and smuggling is the rationale behind the decision to establish (still not completed) a hot-line between the ROKN Second Fleet and the PLAN North Sea Fleet. This author suspects that the ROKN wants this dialogue more than China does. Hence, it provides Beijing leverage with the ROKN it could use to obtain "concessions" from the ROKN--concessions that could negatively impact U.S./USN interests.

On the other hand, the apparent working assumption that China will act in ways counter to ROK interests should North Korea collapse, in combination with the historic dispute over Koguryo, generates a strategic predisposition by the ROK to hedge its bets with China by sustaining a strong ROK-U.S. alliance. So long as a clear path toward reunification is not evident, ROK officers are likely to remain conflicted about their relationship with China since it is China that is perpetuating the North Korean regime by its economic and political support.

### **Other ROKN Concerns About China**

The ROKN has specific concerns about the PLAN, starting with the fact that a Chinese attack on Taiwan would endanger commercial traffic plying the SLOC's near Taiwan that the ROK depends upon.

Next, the ROKN has angst over the large number of excessive maritime claims that the PRC maintains in the South and East China Seas. There is a two-fold concern: first, that these claims will ripen into new restrictions on navigation and over flight in areas now regarded as the high seas; and second, the process of making new excessive claims could embolden more states to do the same in order to enhance their "security" or gain control over ocean resources (especially oil and gas) The escalation of excessive claims

escalation is ongoing and, if left unchecked, could become a source of regional conflict which would necessarily affect the ROK.

In a related point, the ROK and China disagree over how to demarcate the continental shelf and overlapping EEZ's in the Yellow Sea. Finally, the operating areas of the PLAN and ROKN overlap in the Yellow and East China seas, and the ROKN worries about deconflicting those operations—especially water space management in the case of submarine operations. This is another good reason for the fleet-to-fleet hot-line, but given the inherent sensitivity surrounding the specifics of submarine ops that all navies share, this is likely to remain more of an aspiration than a reality since the PLAN will probably not reveal anything significant to a US treaty ally.

### **What the ROKN Wants: A Common Strategic Vision With the USN**

The ROKN conference attendees made it clear it is very intent on developing a “common strategic vision” with the USN. What this means, in their terms is a “vision” that addresses security situations both on the Korean peninsula as well as in the region, and will require close coordination at the strategic policy level. What this means for any USN interlocutor is that discussions with ROKN counterparts should not be limited to defense of Korea alone. The ROKN hopes they can address broader issues such as trilateral cooperation with Japan, shared assessments of Chinese intentions, cooperation on non-traditional maritime security issues, including piracy, disaster relief, SLOC security and the like. The ROKN will be particularly keen to discuss SLOC security issues since that is one of the main arguments they use to rationalize the development of a blue-water navy.

The ROKN also hopes for a single OPLAN that flows from the common strategic vision so that both navies can cope with both war with North Korea and the more likely regime instabilities. Given ROKN concerns about Chinese involvement or intervention, the ROKN-USN discussions on this topic will undoubtedly be very sensitive, and, to be effective, must also be very candid.

For ROKN-USN operations to be effective, the ROKN recognizes that achieving a “perfect interoperability” between the C4I systems is required. This perfect interoperability must include real-time information sharing and common maritime domain awareness.

Finally, in the ROKN's words, it wants the USN to join it in “leading” the PLAN toward building habits of cooperation through trilateral ROK-U.S.-China naval cooperation. It also wants the USN to involve the PLAN in its multilateral exercises such as RIMPAC. This comment suggests that USN interlocutors need to make certain that ROKN counterparts are aware of the initiatives that the USN has taken along these lines over the past few years.



## **Concluding Thoughts**

The overall alliance relationship with the ROK is becoming increasingly complicated. As the alliance evolves over the next few years to become more regional and global, that in turn will create angst in Beijing that will be communicated down through the PLA and through the on-going vehicle of ROK-PRC senior military dialogues to the ROKN. This will in turn make the ROK military, including of course the ROKN, become more conflicted as it seeks to balance its relationship with the U.S. and China.

For both political and security reasons this need to balance may make it far more difficult to move ahead on the legitimate ROKN desire to have a “common operational system” with the USN. However, having such a system in place is in the national interest of the United States because preserving a strong U.S.-ROK alliance is in the national interest.

For a half-century army-to-army interaction has been the central feature of military relationship. Now, as the alliance evolves into one with greater regional and international scope it will of necessity increasingly rest on a strong foundation of navy to navy cooperation—which will be a historic departure for both navies. To achieve a common strategic vision, U.S. interlocutors will need a clear vision of where the United States wants to be in its alliance with South Korea, as well as patience while the ROK sorts through its own issues with China, and, it must be added, with Japan.

To assist in developing this vision it may be useful for the Commander, U.S. Pacific Fleet to sponsor a series of “Common Strategic Vision Workshops” at the Track II level. The current KIMS-CNA relationship could potentially morph into such a project.

**DRAFT AGENDA (final)**

**“PLA Navy’s Build-up and ROK Navy-US Navy Cooperation”**

**Conference Co-Sponsored by the Korea Institute for Maritime Strategy (KIMS)  
and the Center for Naval Analyses (CNA)**

Lotte Hotel, Seoul  
Tel: 82-02-771-1000 Fax: 82-02-752-3758  
E-mail: reservation@hotellotte.co.kr

**Wednesday 19 November 2008**

1830 Welcome Dinner (Peacock Room 36F, Lotte Hotel) for members of CNA,  
KIMS and other Conference Participants

**Thursday 20 November 2008**

0830-0900 Registration

0900-0920 Welcome and Opening Remarks by Co-Host:

ADM(ret) Byoung-Tae An, President, KIMS,

Dr. Thomas A. Bowditch, Manager and Research Team Leader, CNA

0920-1045 Panel One: China's Maritime Strategy and Territorial Sovereign Disputes

Moderator: Dr. Thomas A. Bowditch, Manager and Research Team Leader, CNA

Paper1: China's Maritime Strategy & Development Prospects

- Mr. Fred Vellucci, China Analyst, CNA

Paper2: China's Territorial Sovereignty Proclamation over Southeast Islands

including Taiwan Sphere and Standpoint of U.S.

- Captain Mark Rosen, JD, JAG Corps, USN (retired), Deputy Counsel, CNA

Paper 3: China's Territorial Ambition: Past, Present &Future

- Professor Taeho Kim, Hallym Institute of Advanced International Studies,  
Korea

1045-1100 Coffee Break

1100-1200 Discussion

Paper1: Professor Heung-Kyu Kim, Institute of Foreign Affairs and National Security

Paper2: Professor Chang-Wee Lee, University of Seoul

Paper3: Dr. Thomas A. Bowditch, Manager and Research Team Leader, CNA

1200-1320 Luncheon

1325-1450 Panel Two: PLA Navy and ROK Navy – US Navy Cooperation

Moderator: Dr. Yong-Sup Han, Director, Research Institute on National Security  
Affairs, Korea National Defense University

Paper4: PLA Navy's Build-up and Response of U.S Navy

– RADM(ret). Michael A. McDevitt, Vice President & Director, CNA

Paper5: PLA Navy's Build-up and the Development Direction of ROK Navy

– Capt & Dr. Suk-Joon Yoon, ROK Navy

Paper6: PLA Navy's Build -up and ROK Navy – US Navy Cooperation

– RADM & Dr. Ho-Sup Jung, ROK Navy

1450-1505 Coffee Break

1505-1610 Discussion

Paper4: Capt. & Dr. Sam-Man Chung, ROK Navy

Paper5: Mr. Ken Gause, Senior Analyst, CNA

Paper6: RADM(ret). Michael A. McDevitt, Vice President & Director, CNA

1610 Conclusion

1630 Prospects for Future Cooperation and Next Steps

– President An and Vice President McDevitt

1700-1820 Move to Walker Hill Hotel

1830-2200 Dinner & entertainment (Walker Hill Show –The Great Feast)

# Extending the First Line of Defense: China's Naval Strategy and Development Prospects

By Frederic Vellucci Jr.<sup>1</sup>

The PLAN is the first line of defense (*shoudang qichong*; 首当其冲) for protecting China's sovereignty, territorial integrity, and maritime rights and interests. The PLA's traditional structure as a 'continental military' (*dalu jun*; 大陆军) is unsuitable for the present situation and tasks. [The PLA] must increase its expenditure for navy modernization.<sup>2</sup>

-PLAN Political Department Deputy Director RADM Yao Wenhui, July 2007

## I. Introduction

China and the world have both undergone fundamental changes since Beijing issued its current military strategy more than 15 years ago in 1993.<sup>3</sup> The conditions under which China formulated its current "offshore defense" naval strategy in 1986 are even more remote from Beijing's current concerns and threat perceptions. In response to fundamental changes both domestically within China as well as internationally, the Central Military Commission has twice adjusted China's national military strategy – the *Military Strategic Guidelines* – in the past six years. These recent adjustments have significantly altered China's calculus on the roles and value of its navy and have raised the PLAN's status as a service, relative to its past, by:

- Expanding PLAN roles and missions for protecting China's increasingly important maritime and overseas economic interests
- Increasing the PLAN's priority for modernization
- Weighing a potential strategic transition from "offshore" to "open ocean" defense
- Emphasizing military operations other than war (MOOTW) including fighting terrorism, and conducting peacekeeping and humanitarian assistance operations, in addition to combat missions, as key PLA missions

Domestically, Beijing's model of export-led growth and development has transformed China from a local power with regional interests into a regional power with global interests. As the *Military Strategic Guidelines* have evolved in response to this fundamental change, the PLAN's status, roles, and missions have been continuously evolving. During this time, the PLAN's core missions have shifted from "continental defense," to "ensuring unification and defending maritime rights and interests," and most

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<sup>1</sup> The author is a CNA China Studies analyst and can be reached at [vellucf@cna.org](mailto:vellucf@cna.org). The views expressed in this paper are solely those of the author, and do not represent the views or opinions of CNA.

<sup>2</sup> Yao Wenhui, "Jianshe Qiangda Haijun, Weihe Woguo Haiyang Zhanlue Liyi" (Build a Powerful Navy, Defend China's Maritime Strategic Interests), *Guofang*, 2007 no. 7, p. 4.

<sup>3</sup> For an excellent introduction to China's military strategy see: David M. Finkelstein, "China's National Military Strategy: An Overview of the 'Military Strategic Guidelines'", in Roy Kamphausen and Andrew Scobell, Eds, *Right-Sizing the People's Liberation Army: Exploring the Contours of China's Military*, U.S. Army War College Press, September 2007

recently to serving as the “first line of defense” for safeguarding China’s economic growth and expanding national interests.

Internationally, changes in the nature of warfare created a requirement for an expanded naval capability to provide strategic depth in defense of the Chinese homeland in a future informationized war. The 2002 adjustment to the *Military Strategic Guidelines* was a response to the changing nature of warfare as the PLA perceived it. Since the PLAN would likely be involved in the opening moments of a future war, the navy has acquired a priority for advanced weapons and equipment.

To understand how these evolving concerns and changes are shaping China’s naval strategy and related naval modernization, we must first understand how that strategy is formulated and adjusted. The contents of China’s military strategy are contained in a collection of guiding policy documents and speeches known as the *Military Strategic Guidelines for the New Period* (*xin shiqi junshi zhanlue fangzhen*; 新时期军事战略方针). The Chinese navy’s strategy, known as the “offshore defense” (*jinhai fangyu zhanlue*; 近海防御战略), is a subcomponent of the broader *Military Strategic Guidelines*.<sup>4</sup> The Central Military Commission first issued this strategy more than 22 years ago in 1986.

This paper will first outline the key components of the *Military Strategic Guidelines* as they relate to the PLAN. Understanding how rising maritime security concerns have affected recent adjustments to the key components of the *Military Strategic Guidelines* will provide a course for plotting the PLAN’s near-term developmental trajectory. Next, the paper will describe each of the adjustments to the *Military Strategic Guidelines* between 1993 and the present as they relate to the PLAN. Finally, this paper will analyze how rising status for the PLAN has manifested itself in terms of expanded missions. Tracking the drivers and outputs of adjustments to the *Guidelines* reveals clear and unambiguous information concerning China’s intentions for modernizing its forces and the ways it is most likely to use those increasing capabilities.

## **II. Current PLA Strategy: the *Military Strategic Guidelines for the New Period*<sup>5</sup>**

China’s current military strategy, the “*Military Strategic Guidelines for the New Period*” was promulgated by then Central Military Commission (CMC) Chairman Jiang Zemin on January 13, 1993 at an expanded CMC meeting.<sup>6</sup> While the *Military Strategic Guidelines* provide overall guidance on strategic issues for the entire PLA, there is a subcomponent of the *Guidelines* that applies exclusively to the PLA Navy. As a subordinate component of China’s national military strategy, China’s naval strategy is bound by the same

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<sup>4</sup> Yang Huaqing and Quan Xike, “*Zhongguo Renmin Jiefangjun Haijun*” (Chinese People’s Liberation Army Navy), in Shi Yunsheng, ed., *Zhongguo Haijun Baike Quanshu* (China Navy Encyclopedia), Beijing: Haichao Publishers, Vol. 2, December 1998, p. 1949.

<sup>5</sup> This section draws heavily from Dr. David Finkelstein’s research on the *Military Strategic Guidelines* outlined in his unpublished monograph, “China’s National Military Strategy Revisited.”

<sup>6</sup> “The International Situation and the Military Strategic Guidelines,” *The Selected Works of Jiang Zemin*, Beijing: People’s Publishing House, August 2006 Volume 1, pp 278-294, cited in David M. Finkelstein, “China’s National Military Strategy: An Overview of the ‘Military Strategic Guidelines’”

guidance, missions, objectives, and programmatic initiatives laid out in the *Military Strategic Guidelines*. The remainder of this section will introduce the key components of China's national military strategy that play a role in determining China's naval strategy.

### Key Components of the *Military Strategic Guidelines*

The key functions of the *Military Strategic Guidelines* are to communicate the PLA's:<sup>7</sup>

- 1) Official strategic assessment (*zhanlue panduan*; 战略判断)
- 2) Contingency-based assessment; also known as the "Main Strategic Direction" (*zhuyao zhanlue fangxiang*; 主要战略方向)
- 3) Capabilities-based assessment; also known as the "Military Combat Preparations" (*junshi douzheng zhunbei*; 军事斗争准备)
- 4) Strategic missions and objectives (*zhanlue renwu he mubiao*; 战略任务和目标)
- 5) Guidance for military building (*jundui jianshe*; 军队建设) and "Navy Building" (*haijun jianshe*; 海军建设) programs

#### 1) Presenting the strategic assessment

The strategic assessment deals with key global security trends, changes in China's security situation, changes in China's domestic situation, and changes in the nature of warfare itself. It answers the question, "what are the security implications of these trends for China?"<sup>8</sup>

The Strategic Assessment is usually encapsulated in short statements summarizing the current global situation. For example, the Strategic Assessment as of 2003 was reportedly, "Peaceful overall, with localized warfare, calm overall with localized tensions, and largely stable, with localized unrest".<sup>9</sup> At that time, then CMC Chairman Jiang Zemin further elaborated that four major global trends that would continue to have a profound impact on world peace and stability:

- The continuing conflict between unipolarity and multipolarity and the struggle between hegemonism and anti-hegemonism
- The ever-quicken pace of economic globalization is leading to an unsustainable level of global inequality
- The competition in advanced military technologies continues to get worse, militaries around the world are engaged in strategic reassessments, and a serious imbalance in global military forces is emerging

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<sup>7</sup> David M. Finkelstein, "China's National Military Strategy Revisited"

<sup>8</sup> See: David M. Finkelstein, "China's National Military Strategy Revisited"

<sup>9</sup> General Political Department, "*Jiang Zemin Guofang he Jundui Jianshe Sixiang Xuexi Gangyao*" (Study Guide for Jiang Zemin's Thinking on National Defense and Army Building), PLA Publishing House, Beijing, July 2003, [Available on the Jiangxi Province National Defense Education Network, <http://gfjy.jiangxi.gov.cn>; Accessed August 8, 2008] The Chinese for the above strategic assessment was: (*zongti heping, jubu zhanluan, zongti huanhe, jubu jinzhang, zongti wending, jubu dongdang*; 总体和平局部战乱, 总体缓和局部紧张, 总体稳定局部动荡).

- Territorial, ethnic, and religious conflicts in some countries and regions are intensifying and leading to armed conflicts, local wars, and increasing numbers of terrorist attacks

## 2) *Issuing a contingency-based assessment: the “Main Strategic Direction”*

This assessment outlines China’s most likely next enemy, where a conflict would be most likely to break out, and deals with how the PLA should deploy forces and make preparations.<sup>10</sup> In the mid- late-1980s this direction shifted away from the Soviet Union to the coast line with no specific enemy identified.<sup>11</sup> Beginning at that time, China began to place greater importance on the ocean and protecting China’s maritime rights and interests.

The available evidence suggests that when the new *Military Strategic Guidelines* were issued in 1993, the contingency-based assessment identified east and south toward the ocean as the most likely zone of conflict. Initially, Taiwan was the primary concern driving this decision. As then CMC Chairman Jiang Zemin noted in his January 1993 speech to the CMC announcing the new *Military Strategic Guidelines*, “At present and for the foreseeable future, our priority in terms of military struggle is preventing Taiwan from fomenting any great Taiwan independence incidents.”<sup>12</sup> Similarly, Academy of Military Science researcher and Chinese Defense White Paper author Senior Colonel Chen Zhou has recently noted:

The CMC’s main goal in shifting the strategic center (*zhanlue zhongxin*; 战略中心) from the [former Soviet Union] to the direction of the eastern and southern coasts was to prevent a major “Taiwan independence” incident.<sup>13</sup>

While preventing Taiwan’s independence was the main initial driver for fixing the Main Strategic Direction on the ocean, China was also concerned about the rising importance of its eastern seaboard for China’s economy. Furthermore, since 1993 China’s maritime economic interests have expanded to a sufficient level to raise questions about Taiwan’s predominant role in determining China’s naval strategy. This issue will be dealt with in greater detail in part four, which outlines the impact of the *New Historic Missions* on PLAN strategy.

## 3) *Issuing the capabilities-based assessment: the “Military Combat “Preparations”*

This assessment outlines the next type of war the PLA believes it is most likely to fight and is a key driver for modernization program decisions.<sup>14</sup> The PLAN component of this

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<sup>10</sup> See: David M. Finkelstein, “China’s National Military Strategy Revisited”

<sup>11</sup> Peng Guangqian, “The Development and History of Our Country’s Strategic Guidelines of an Active Defense Since the Founding of the Nation,” in Peng Guangqian, *Researching Questions of Chinese Military Strategy*, Liberation Army Publishing House, Beijing, January 2006, pp. 86-104, *Zhongguo Junshi Zhanlue Wenti Yanjiu*. This chapter was derived from a lecture Peng delivered at the Academy of Military Science in 1993.

<sup>12</sup> Jiang Zemin speech to the CMC on January 13, 1993

<sup>13</sup> Chen Zhou, “*Shilun Zhongguo Weihu Heping Fazhan de Fangyu Xing Guofang Zhengce*” (An Analysis of China’s Defensive National Defense Policy of Protecting Peace and Development), *Zhongguo Junshi Kexue*, 2007 no. 6, p. 3.

<sup>14</sup> See: David M. Finkelstein, “China’s National Military Strategy Revisited”

assessment is closely related to the PLAN's strategic missions and objectives and is "geared toward the most serious and most likely threats facing China's strategic interests."<sup>15</sup> When Jiang Zemin issued the *Military Strategic Guidelines for the New Period* in 1993, the capabilities-based assessment focused on "local wars under modern technological, especially high-tech, conditions."<sup>16</sup> This guidance was based on the CMC's assessment of the revolution in military affairs (RMA) demonstrated in the 1991 Gulf War. Significantly, this component of the *Military Strategic Guidelines* was recently adjusted in 2002 at an expanded meeting of the CMC. The details of this adjustment and its implications for the PLAN will be discussed in greater detail below.

#### 4) Articulating the military's strategic missions and objectives

These are the strategic-level missions assigned by the Party-state to the PLA.<sup>17</sup> Strategic Missions and Objectives outline the ways in which the might be utilized determine the direction of military modernization and the ways in which the PLA will be utilized.<sup>18</sup> One PLA Navy officer writing in 2004 described the PLAN's strategic missions and objectives (*haijun zhanlue shiming renwu*; 海军战略使命任务) as follows:

- Protecting and defending national security interests and development interests in the maritime direction
- Protecting national sovereignty and maritime rights and interests
- Ensuring unification of the motherland and protecting social stability
- Participating in foreign affairs activities and supporting the state's diplomatic objectives
- Providing a reliable security guarantee for the state's national development strategy<sup>19</sup>

#### 5) Issuing guidance for military building and navy building

Military building and navy building are the programmatic realization of the other components listed above.<sup>20</sup> Because navy building refers to the institutional and hardware modernization programs keyed to national defense requirements and objectives, this component of the *Military Strategic Guidelines* is most likely adjusted whenever any other component is adjusted. For example, as a result of a new capabilities-based assessment in 2002 which directed the PLA to focus on long-range precision weapons,

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<sup>15</sup> Quan Jinfu, "Xin Shiji Woguo Haijun Zhanlue Lilun de Chuangxin Fazhan" (The Innovations and Development of the Chinese Navy's Strategy Theory in the New Century), *Journal of PLA Nanjing Institute of Politics*, 2004 No. 3, p. 84. The PLAN's capabilities-based assessment is known as the PLAN Military Preparations Key Points (*haijun junshi zhunbei jidian*; 海军军事准备基点).

<sup>16</sup> Jiang Zemin, "Lun Zhongguo Tese Junshi Biange" (Discussing the Military Transformation with Chinese Characteristics), in Jiang Zemin, ed., *Jiang Zemin Wenzhai* (Selected Works of Jiang Zemin), People's Publishing, Beijing, 2006, pp. 576-83.

<sup>17</sup> See: David M. Finkelstein, "China's National Military Strategy Revisited"

<sup>18</sup> Quan Jinfu, *Ibid.*, p 84.

<sup>19</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>20</sup> See: David M. Finkelstein, "China's National Military Strategy Revisited"



naval modernization objectives were adjusted to focus on developing “comprehensive offshore campaign” capabilities to extend “strategic depth.”<sup>21</sup>

The following section will discuss how the PLAN’s roles and status have evolved under the current version of the *Military Strategic Guidelines*. It will show that as a result of two recent adjustments to the *Guidelines* in 2002 and 2004, the PLAN has acquired increased status as a strategic service as well as an expanding portfolio of roles and missions.

### **III. Increasing Roles and Status of the PLAN under the *Military Strategic Guidelines for the New Period: 1993-Present***

China’s current *Military Strategic Guidelines* have evolved between 1993 and the present to account both for changes in the nature of warfare as well as China’s expanded national interests in a globalizing world, and China’s growing comprehensive national power. Throughout this time period, the PLAN’s status, roles, and missions have continued to increase in importance. This section will outline the evolution of the *Military Strategic Guidelines* between 1993 and the present and analyze the effects that two recent adjustments to those *Guidelines* have had on China’s naval strategy. An analysis of PLAN strategy during this time period reveals that the degree of status and range of missions assigned to the PLAN have both expanded proportionate to the growth of China’s economy and international trade.

#### **1993: Unprecedented focus on the oceans**

The PLAN’s status as a strategic PLA service rose immediately when Jiang Zemin issued the *Military Strategic Guidelines for the New Period* in 1993. As a result of the strategic assessment contained within those *Guidelines*, in 1993 China identified the eastern and southern seaboard facing the ocean as the region where China would most likely become involved in a conflict. This assessment was based on a number of new security concerns including new trends in domestic Taiwanese politics, the collapse of the Soviet Union, increasing maritime sovereignty disputes, the rising importance of China’s maritime economy, and growing dependence on maritime trade. In 2000, then PLAN Political Commissar Yang Huaqing described Jiang Zemin’s 1993 Strategic Assessment that placed greater emphasis on the strategic importance of the maritime domain:

Jiang Zemin conducted a scientific assessment of the regional maritime security environment in light of the geographic fact that China is both a continental great power (*ludi daguo*; 陆地大国) as well as a coastal great power (*binhai daguo*; 濒海大国). Jiang pointed out that following the end of the Cold War, the international strategic structure has moved closer toward multipolarity, maritime disputes are becoming more intense and complicated, and the maritime environment has already become a field of intense competition and contention between all nations. *As a result of this situation, it is impossible to ignore the numerous actual and potential threats confronting China from the maritime direction. The Navy will*

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<sup>21</sup> Xinhua, “China’s National Defense in 2004”, Section Three, Revolution in Military Affairs with Chinese Characteristics.

*play an extremely important role in a future war. The sea is the important strategic direction (zhongyao zhanlue fangxiang; 重要战略方向) of China's security, and it is the Navy's primary mission to defend China from the seas.*<sup>22</sup>

One PLAN captain studying at China's National Defense University in 1999 similarly noted: "[In the early 1990s] new maritime security challenges, combined with China's continuously rising national power placed the PLAN in an important strategic position facing the Main Strategic Direction (*zhuyao zhanlue fangxiang*; 主要战略方向).<sup>23</sup>

Following the promulgation of the 1993 *Military Strategic Guidelines*, the PLAN's Strategic Guidelines (*haijun zhanlue fangzhen*; 海军战略方针) underwent a major readjustment and the core of PLAN strategy shifted from "Continental Defense" (*baowei dalu*; 保卫大陆) to "Ensuring Unification and Defending Maritime Rights and Interests" (*weihu tongyi, hanwei haiquan*; 维护统一, 捍卫海权).<sup>24</sup> As China's export-oriented economy continued to grow throughout the 1990s, the PLAN continued to acquire increased status as a result of its new role as "protector of China's maritime economic rights and interests." The PLAN captain cited above also noted that,

The importance of maritime shipping for China's opening to the outside world, the importance of maritime industries and maritime resources for China's future economic development, as well as lingering sovereignty disputes with several nations all served to emphasize the PLAN's importance as protector of national maritime economic rights and interests (*weihu guojia haishang jingji liyi*; 维护国家海上经济利益) and the necessity of constructing a powerful PLAN.<sup>25</sup>

This initial 1993 decision to adjust the PLA's contingency-based assessment because of the importance of Taiwan and protecting China's growing maritime rights and interests was reinforced three years later during both the 1995-1996 Taiwan Strait Missile Crisis as well as rising tensions over territorial disputes in the South China Sea.

## 2002: Seeking Strategic Depth in Informationized Wars

The first confirmed adjustment to the *Military Strategic Guidelines for the New Period* occurred in December 2002 when the CMC adjusted its guidance on Military Combat Preparations after assessing United States' operations in Kosovo (1999) and Afghanistan (2001-2002).<sup>26</sup> Based on its continuing studies of modern warfare between 1993 and

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<sup>22</sup> Yang Huaqing, "Zhidaorenmin Haijun Jianshe de Qiangda Sixiang Wuqi: Xuexi Jiang Zemin Guanyu Haijun Jianshe de Zhongyao Sixiang" (The Great Ideological Weapon Guiding Construction of the People's Navy: Studying Jiang Zemin's Important Thinking on Naval Construction), *Qiushi Zazhi*, August 2000, no. 15, pp. 26-29. Emphasis added.

<sup>23</sup> Wang Zaiqing, "Qianxi Xin Shiqi Zhongguo Haijun Zhanlue Yunyong de Zhuanbian" (A Preliminary Analysis of Changes in the Strategic Uses of the Chinese Navy in the New Period), *Junshi Lishi*, (Beijing: Academy of Military Science Press), 1999 no 3, p. 34.

<sup>24</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>25</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>26</sup> Jiang Zemin, "Lun Zhongguo Tese Junshi Biange" (Discussing the Military Transformation with Chinese Characteristics), in Jiang Zemin, ed., *Jiang Zemin Wenzhai* (Selected Works of Jiang Zemin), People's Publishing, Beijing, 2006, p. 580; As noted recently in *Junshi Kexue*, "Adjustments to the Military Combat

2002, the PLA concluded that informationization is now the core of high-tech warfare.<sup>27</sup> As a result, at a December 2002 expanded CMC meeting, Jiang Zemin adjusted the PLA's capabilities-based assessment to focus on "local war under modern *informationized* conditions," instead of "local war under modern *high-tech* conditions" as it had been since 1993.

At an expanded meeting of the CMC in December 2002, Jiang Zemin gave a speech explaining the PLA's new responsibility to prepare for informationized wars noting that the PLA must shift the focus of its modernization in response to the following four ongoing trends in modern warfare. Jiang stated:

- First, informationized weapons and equipment will become the key determinant of military combat capability (*jundui zuozhan nengli*; 军队作战能力)... Striving for information superiority (*xinxi youshi*; 信息优势) has become the focus of warfare, and information dominance (*zhi xinxi quan*; 制信息权) is the key to seizing... maritime dominance (*zhihai quan*; 制海权) and dominance in other combat spaces.
- Second, non-contact and nonlinear operations will become an important form of combat. Informationized weapons and equipment are capable of overcoming the enemy's defense zone and natural geographic protection, directly carrying out mid-long range precision attacks against in-depth targets... The attacking side no longer focuses on annihilating the enemy's effective strength, but instead utilizes key point strikes against the enemy's reconnaissance and early warning, command and control, and air defense systems to paralyze the opponent's entire combat system, destroy his latent power for war and his national will to fight, and achieve the strategic objective. If the defending side lacks medium- and long range non-contact attack means, then even if it has numerous mechanized *juntuan*, it will be a force without many capabilities to retaliate.
- Third, systems confrontation (*xitong duikang*; 系统对抗) will become the basic characteristic of battlefield confrontation. Informationized wars no longer involve confrontations between individual combat elements but are confrontations between integrated combat systems composed of operational platforms, weapon systems, intelligence, reconnaissance, control, and logistics support systems.
- Fourth, space will become the strategic high-point of international military competition.<sup>28</sup>

The 2002 adjustment to the *Military Strategic Guidelines* outlined above had a number of implications for PLAN strategy. First, as noted in Jiang's first trend, information dominance (*zhi xinxi quan*; 制信息权) has become the key to attaining command of the sea (*zhihai quan*; 制海权). This fact, combined with the increased need for long-range precision attack capabilities implied a need for new advanced PLAN weapons and

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Preparations constitute an adjustment to the *Military Strategic Guidelines*." See: Qiu Guijin, Wu Jifeng, and Zhang Liang, "Shilun Junshi Douzheng Zhunbei Jidian de Zhuanbian" (Discussion of the Military Combat Preparations Key Points Transformation), *Zhongguo Junshi Kexue*, 2008 No. 1, p. 85

<sup>27</sup> Shan Xiufa, *Jiang Zemin Guofang he Jundui Jianshe Sixiang Yanjiu* (Studying Jiang Zemin Thought on National Defense and Army Building), Beijing, *Academy of Military Science Press*, April 2004, pp. 72-88

<sup>28</sup> Jiang Zemin, *Ibid*, p. 580.

equipment. In other words, unless China possesses these new informationized long-range attack capabilities, China would be “without many capabilities to retaliate” or defend itself in a future informationized war. While the PLA could acquire either land- or sea-based versions of the type of long-range attack capabilities Jiang described above, there is evidence that Jiang’s speech has been factored into PLAN modernization goals. For example, China’s 2004 Defense White Paper noted that the PLAN has already made some initial progress preparing for “non-contact, nonlinear operations” and “has expanded the space and extended the depth for its offshore defensive operations.”<sup>29</sup>

One recent *Junshi Kexue* article provides a glimpse into the types of capabilities the PLAN may be attempting to acquire. The article noted that the methods of naval military combat are undergoing profound changes as a result of the proliferation of information technologies on the naval battlefield and went on to note that these changes will be manifested in the following aspects:<sup>30</sup>

- 1) Seaboard-focused operations (*xiang'an xing zuozhan*; 向岸性作战) will become a new strategic choice (*zhanlue xuanze*; 战略选择) of naval combat as global cities, industry, and populations are increasingly concentrated along the world’s maritime coastlines. As a result, blockades, amphibious operations, and enforcing “no sailing” and “no fly” zones will become increasingly important methods of military combat preparation (*junshi douzheng zhunbei*; 军事斗争准备)
- 2) “Net-centric warfare” (*wangluo zhongxin zhan*; 网络中心战), rather than combat platforms (*zuozhan pingtai*; 作战平台) [i.e. vessels], will be most critical for attaining command of the sea (*zhihai quan*; 制海权)
- 3) The naval battlefield will expand into multiple dimensions including outer space and the electromagnetic spectrum
- 4) “Non-contact” (*fei jiechu*; 非接触) long-range precision strikes will become the primary battle method (*zhanfa*; 战法) of future naval wars
- 5) Integrated “soft-kill” (*ruan shashang*; 软杀伤) and “hard kill” (*ying cuihui*; 硬摧毁) strikes will become decisive in naval battles

The 2002 adjustment was a response to the changing nature of warfare and represents Beijing’s efforts to transform the PLA into a force capable of fighting and winning such wars. The following section will consider Beijing’s recognition that the PLA in general and the PLAN in particular must be prepared to protect China’s expanding interests in a globalized world.

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<sup>29</sup> 2004 Defense White Paper.

<sup>30</sup> Tang Fuquan and Wu Yi, “*Zhongguo Haifang Zhanlue Tanyao*” (A Discussion of China’s Maritime Defense Strategy), *Zhongguo Junshi Kexue*, 2007 no 5, p. 94

## 2004: New strategic missions and objectives

On December 24, 2004, recently-promoted CMC Chairman Hu Jintao announced a new set of Strategic Missions and Objectives for the Chinese armed forces.<sup>31</sup> These new missions, officially known as the *Historic Missions of the Armed Forces in the New Period of the New Century* (*xin shiji xin jieduan wojun lishi shiming*; 新世纪新阶段我军历史使命), have adjusted the *Military Strategic Guidelines* to account for a geographic and functional broadening of China's perceived national security interests. Among other things, the *Historic Missions* task the PLA with a new responsibility for maritime, space, and electromagnetic spectrum security, and include a heightened emphasis on non-traditional security issues.

Following Hu Jintao's 2004 promulgation of the *Historic Missions*, the PLA's strategic missions and Objectives now include the following:<sup>32</sup>

- 1) Consolidating the ruling status of the Chinese Communist Party.
- 2) Ensuring China's sovereignty, territorial integrity, and domestic security during its "strategic opportunity period."<sup>33</sup> This includes responsibility for dealing with Taiwanese and ethnic separatist issues, non-traditional security issues, territorial land and maritime disputes, and domestic social security problems.<sup>34</sup>
- 3) Safeguarding China's expanding national interests. This mission calls on the armed forces to broaden their view of security to account for China's growing national interests. This refers to resource security, sea lane of communication (SLOC) security, and maritime rights and interests. It also calls on PLA to consider the security of China's overseas investments and presence.
- 4) Helping to ensure world peace. To accomplish this goal the *Historic Missions* call upon the armed forces to both increase participation in international security activities (such as peacekeeping, search and rescue, and anti-terror operations) as well as to improve its military capabilities to "deal with crises, safeguard peace, contain war, and win a war"<sup>35</sup>

By comparison, when the *Military Strategic Guidelines for the New Period* were issued in 1993, the PLA's strategic missions and objectives included only the second mission listed above (ensuring China's sovereignty, territorial integrity, and domestic security) as

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<sup>31</sup> For additional information on the Chinese Armed Force's New Historic Missions, see Daniel Hartnett's unpublished paper, "Towards a Globally Focused Chinese Military: The Historic Missions of the Chinese Armed Forces," Summer 2008.

<sup>32</sup> Sun Kejia, Liu Feng, Liu Yang, Lin Peisong, eds., *Zhongshi Luxing Xin Shiji Xin Jieduan Wojun Lishi Shiming* (Faithfully Carrying Out Our Military's Historic Missions in the New Period of the New Century), Haichao Publishing, Beijing 2006, pp. 31-35.

<sup>33</sup> The phrase "strategic opportunity period" (*zhanlue jiyu qi*; 战略机遇期) is a standard term that refers to a period when various international and domestic factors create a positive environment for a nation's economic and social development. Jiang Zemin first used this term during his report to the 16<sup>th</sup> Party Congress (November 8, 2002) in reference to the first 20 years of the 21<sup>st</sup> century.

<sup>34</sup> Sun Kejia, et al., *Ibid*, pp. 102-126.

<sup>35</sup> Wang Zhaohai, "*Qieshi Jianfu Qi Xin Shiji Xin Jieduan Wojun de Lishi Shiming*" (Honestly Undertake the Historic Missions of Our Armed Forces in the New Period of the New Century), *Qiushi*, 2005 no 23, p. 25.

well as one component of the third mission (protecting maritime rights and interests).<sup>36</sup> While the implications of adding the first mission to consolidate CCP rule are beyond the scope of this paper, it is significant to note that both the expanded third mission as well as the new fourth mission fall heavily within the PLAN's purview.

Importantly, the *New Historic Missions* have only adjusted and expanded the original 1993 list of PLA roles and missions. China remains concerned with the same issues it faced in 1993, including Taiwan and domestic stability. However, China is now much more integrated with the global economy in 2007 than it was in 1993. As China's 2006 Defense White Paper noted, "Never before has China been so closely bound up with the rest of the world as it is today."<sup>37</sup> For example, the total value of China's trade in 1993 was USD 600 billion, and represented just 3% of global trade. By 2007, these numbers had increased to USD 2 trillion and 8% respectively (See Figure 1, below). As a result of this increased integration with the world economy, the security of China's development interests has become a larger concern. As Academy of Military Science researcher and Chinese Defense White Paper author Senior Colonel Chen Zhou has noted,

From the angle of long-term development, the issue of sovereignty and national unification remains grave, but the issue of development has risen to one that affects the overall situation of national security.<sup>38</sup>

As an adjustment to China's *Military Strategic Guidelines*, the *New Historic Missions* constituted Beijing's recognition of the fact that between 1993 and 2004, China's security requirements had expanded in both quantitative and qualitative terms. Compared with 1993, China now has more interests spread all over the world that are subject to increasing numbers and types of security threats. As Shijiazhuang Army Command Academy Deputy Political Commissar Liu Jingsheng recently noted:

In the new century and the new period, along with the deepening changes to both the international situation as well as domestic society, China's influence in the world has been constantly expanding. At the same time however, external factors that would restrict development and negatively affect security are also on the rise and protecting national security and the interests of development (*fazhan liyi*; 发展利益) has become increasingly difficult.<sup>39</sup>

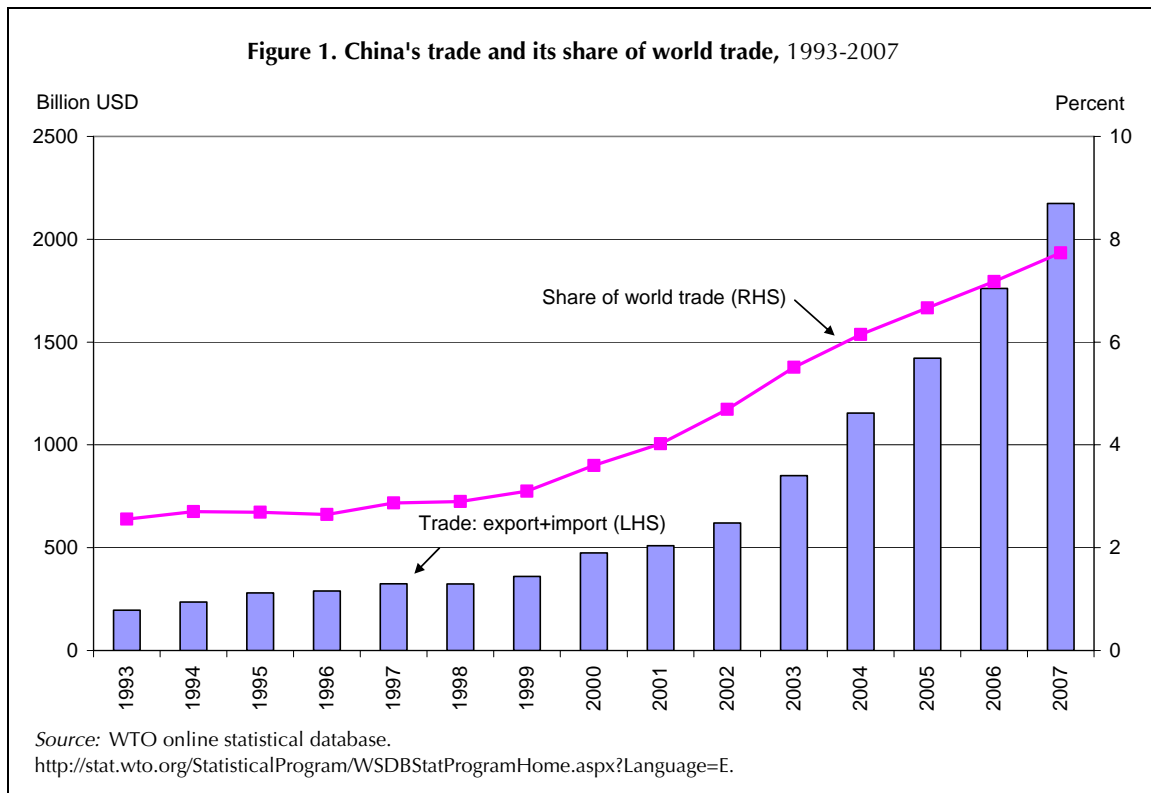
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<sup>36</sup> Sun Kejia, et al., *Ibid.*, pp. 31-35. David M. Finkelstein, "China's National Military Strategy Revisited"

<sup>37</sup> *China's National Defense in 2006*

<sup>38</sup> Chen Zhou, *Ibid.*, p. 6.

<sup>39</sup> Liu Jingsheng, *Ibid.*, p. 100.



While Chinese interests have been expanding, in recent years the types of challenges to these expanding interests both at home and abroad have been changing in fundamental ways and now include the increasing threat of transnational non-traditional security issues terrorism, piracy, smuggling, drug trafficking, and emergency natural disaster relief. According to CMC Vice Chairman Xu Caihou, Hu Jintao's *New Historic Missions* are a specific response to these new types of security challenges.<sup>40</sup>

On December 27, 2004, just three days after announcing the *Historic Missions* at the expanded CMC meeting, Hu Jintao spoke at the 10<sup>th</sup> PLAN Party Congress in Beijing where he called upon the PLAN to create a powerful navy that is capable of executing the *Historic Missions in the New Century and New Period*.<sup>41</sup> As a sign of the importance attached to the PLAN's role in these new missions, the entire Central Military Commission Standing Committee was in attendance at this PLAN Party committee meeting.<sup>42</sup> During his speech, Hu called on the PLAN to comprehensively transform the way it conducts navy building (*haijun jianshe zhengti zhuanxing*; 海军建设整体转型) and increase the PLAN's defensive informationized operational capabilities.<sup>43</sup>

<sup>40</sup> Cao Zhi, "CMC Leader Xu Caihou Calls for Studying Hu Jintao's Exposition on PLA Missions," Xinhua, September 20, 2005

<sup>41</sup> Yao Wenhui, *Ibid.*, pp. 1-2.

<sup>42</sup> Xinhua, "Hu Jintao Qiangdiao Duanzao Shiyong Lishi Shiming Yaoqiu de Qiangda Renmin Haijun" (Hu Jintao Calls for the Creation of a Powerful Navy Capable of Executing the Historic Missions), December 27, 2006, [http://news.xinhua.com/politics/2006-12/27/content\\_5539079.htm](http://news.xinhua.com/politics/2006-12/27/content_5539079.htm) [Accessed July 7, 2008]

<sup>43</sup> *Ibid.*

The following section will outline the *New Historic Missions*' impact on Chinese naval strategy.

#### IV. PLAN Strategy in the New Century: the “First Line of Defense”

This section will outline the effects of the *New Historic Missions* on the PLAN to include:

- Adjusting PLAN strategy within the larger context of the *Military Strategic Guidelines*
- Increasing the numbers and types of missions assigned to the PLAN
- Raising the PLAN's status as a strategic service and priority for modernization
- Increasing the emphasis on non-traditional security and military operations other than war
- Initiating a debate about “offshore” vs. “open ocean” defense

The following section will discuss each of these five issues in greater detail.

##### Readjust PLAN strategy as defined in the *Military Strategic Guidelines*

The *Historic Missions* have readjusted China's naval strategy within the larger context of PLA strategy as defined in the *Military Strategic Guidelines*.<sup>44</sup> They clearly link maritime security with national security, they link maritime rights and interests with national strategic interests, and they link the creation of a more powerful PLAN with the preservation of world peace and stability. According to PLAN Political Commissar Hu Yanlin, the *Historic Missions* provided the PLAN with new guidance concerning:<sup>45</sup>

- The correct orientation of navy modernization (*haijun jianshe de zhengque fangxiang*; 海军建设的正确方向)
- The strategic objectives of navy development (*haijun fazhan de zhanlue mubiao*; 海军发展的战略目标). These strategic objectives include constructing a PLAN capable of protecting China's security and development interests (*fazhan liyi*; 发展利益) in the maritime direction, a PLAN whose power is commensurate with China's international status, one that is capable of containing and winning potential local maritime wars under informationized conditions, and is capable of effectively executing the PLAN's historic missions in the new period of the new century.
- Higher standards for PLAN modernization and capabilities acquisitions (*haijun xiandai hua he junshi douzheng zhunbei*; 海军现代化和军事斗争准备)

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<sup>44</sup> Hu Yanlin, “Weirao Luxing Wojun Lishi Shiming Jiaqiang Haijun Sixiang Zhengzhi Jianshe” (Strengthening PLAN Ideological and Political Construction Concerning the Implementation of the Armed Forces' Historic Missions), *Qiushi*, 2006 No 2, p. 45

<sup>45</sup> *Ibid*, p. 44



## Increased numbers and types of missions assigned to the PLAN

As a result of the *Historic Missions*, the PLAN has been assigned new roles and missions for protecting China's increasingly important maritime and overseas economic interests.<sup>46</sup> As PLAN Commander Wu Shengli and Political Commissar Hu Yanlin noted in 2007, these missions include:

- Protecting the security of normal fishing production, maritime resource exploitation, maritime surveying and scientific investigation
- Guaranteeing the security of transportation and shipping and the strategic lanes for energy resources
- Ensuring China's jurisdiction over adjacent areas (*pilian qu*; 毗连区), the continental shelf, and the exclusive economic zone
- Providing effective protection for China's maritime rights and interests.<sup>47</sup>

Chinese security analysts increasingly recognize the sea and the need for sea power are as vital for China's continued development. China's maritime economy accounted for ten percent of Chinese GDP in 2007, up from 4 percent in 2001 and that percentage is growing (See Figure 2, below). Problems exist, however, because much of China's claimed maritime territory is exploited or controlled by other nations. By strengthening the PLAN, China believes that it can bolster claims to the disputed maritime territory and resources in the Asia Pacific region.<sup>48</sup> The Chinese Academy of Military Science (AMS) War Theories and Strategic Studies Department argued that these resources are the sole guarantee for China's continued economic development.<sup>49</sup>

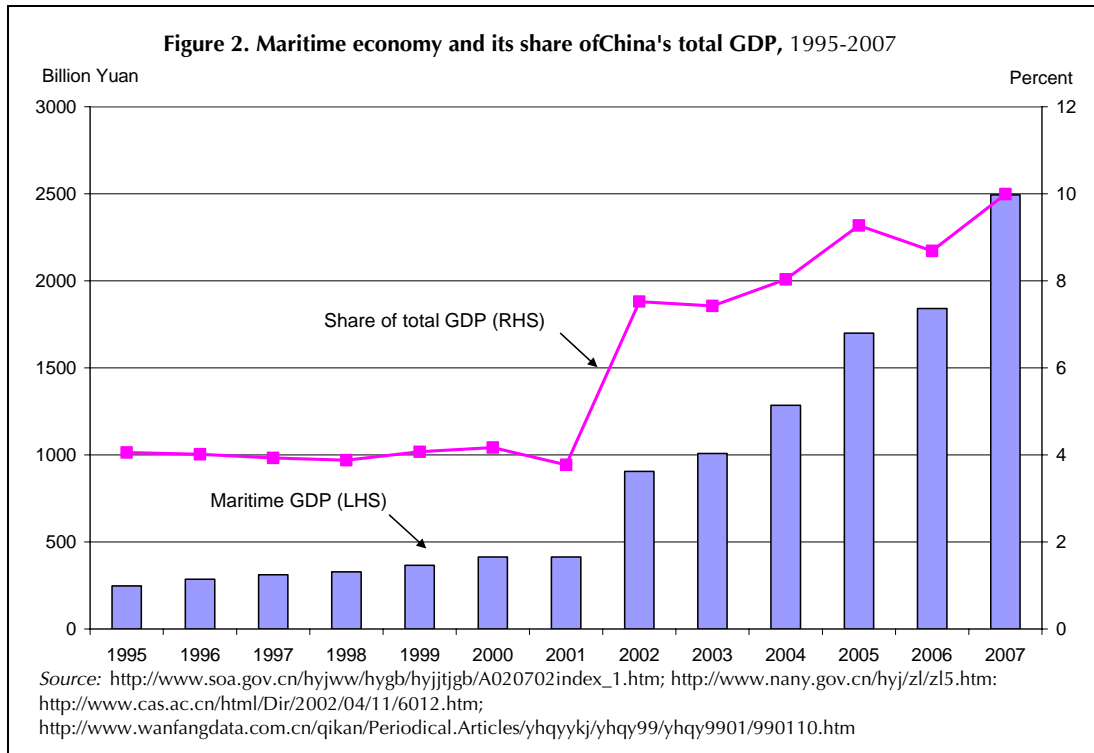
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<sup>46</sup> Lu Hongzhe, "Renqing Haijun Jianshe he Fazhan de Shidai Tezheng, Cengqiang Luxing Wojun Lishi Shiming de Jinpo Gan he Zeren Gan" (Clearly Understand the Characteristics of the Era for Navy Building and Development: Strengthening the Sense of Urgency and Responsibility in Carrying out the PLA's Historic Missions), Harbin Engineering University Navy Selection Office (*haijun xuanpeiban*; 海军选配办), May 28, 2006, <http://gongxue.cn/quofangshichuang/ShowArticle.asp?ArticleID=13761> [Accessed: August 12, 2008]

<sup>47</sup> Wu Shengli and Hu Yanlin, "Duanzao Sheying Wojun Lishi Shiming Yaoqiu de Qiangda Renmin Haijun" (Building a Powerful PLA Navy that Meets the Requirements of Our Army's Historic Missions), *Qiushi*, July 16, 2007, No. 14

<sup>48</sup> Gao Xinsheng, "Zhongguo Guofang Fazhan Mianlin de Zhuyao Tiaozhan yu Zhance" (Main Challenges and Countermeasures facing China's Maritime Defense Development), *Guofang*, no. 11, 2005, p. 63

<sup>49</sup> Ge Dongsheng, ed., *Guojia Anquan Zhanlue Lun (Theory of National Security Strategy)*, Military Science Press, Beijing, 2006, p. 223. This book was written by the War Theories and Strategic Studies Department of the Academy of Military Science, thus increasing its authoritativeness.



While the importance of maritime rights and interests has been an issue for the PLAN since the early 1990s, there is now an added emphasis on increasing types of maritime interests located further from China's shores. These interests include energy security, sea line of communication security, as well as the security of Chinese economic interests located abroad. For example, China's dependence on crude oil imports has risen from 8 percent in 1994 to 48 percent in 2007 (See Figure 3, below).<sup>50</sup> The 2006 AMS volume *Theory of National Security Strategy* highlighted the importance of these overseas interests when it noted,

<sup>50</sup> While Chinese government officials and security analysts frequently cite this statistic it is important to note that China's imported oil provides no more than 10 percent of its total energy needs. For an excellent analysis of China's energy security concerns see: Bernard D. Cole, *Sea Lanes and Pipelines: Energy Security in Asia*, Praeger Security International, 2008.

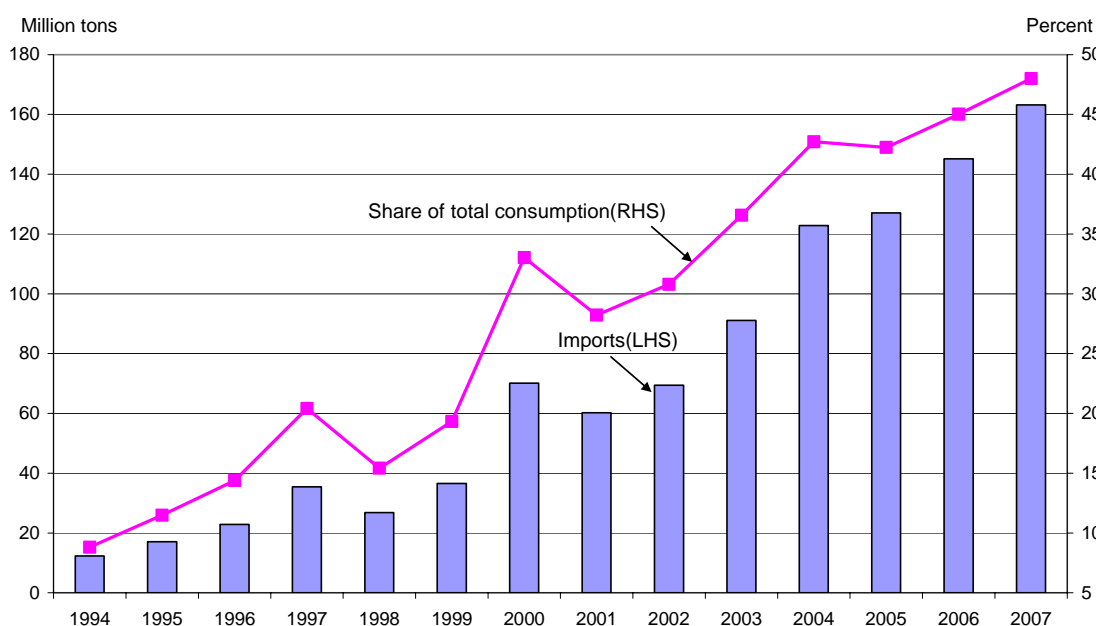
Along with the rapid development of China's economy, and economic globalization, national economic interests are currently developing and extending in the direction of the ocean. Maritime foreign trade routes – especially energy transportation routes – have already become an important lifeline of China's economic development, and are the links of interaction and association between China and the world.<sup>51</sup>

### Rise of Energy Security in Chinese Strategy

Energy security has emerged as a key Chinese security concern since Hu Jintao first raised the issue during a Central Party Economic Work Meeting in 2003. Hu pointed out that more than 50% of China's oil imports come from the Middle East, Africa, and Southeast Asia, and more than 80% of those imports must pass through the Strait of Malacca. As a result, he emphasized that China must actively adopt measures to protect the security of China's energy.

Source: Chen Yan, "Zhongguo Yupo 'Maliujia Kunju' Taiguo Luxian Sheng Zhuanji" (Thailand Presents a Path for Overcoming China's 'Malacca Dilemma'), *Southern Daily*, February 11, 2004

Figure 3. China's crude oil imports and share of total consumption, 1994-2007



Source: National Bureau of Statistics of China. China Statistical Yearbook 2007(p.737); 2005(p.638); 2003(p.666); 2001(p.597); 1999(p.589). Beijing: China Statistics Press; <http://xmecc.smex.gov.cn/pic/2006416204525.doc>

Finally, in addition to the concerns over the security of energy, trade, and overseas assets described above, Chinese security analysts are increasingly concerned with the vulnerability of China's domestic economic base to threats from the ocean. As Dalian Vessel Academy Professor Tang Fuquan noted in 2007,

<sup>51</sup> Ge Dongsheng, *Ibid*, p. 222.

Continued economic growth increasingly depends on maritime security because China's economic center of gravity is concentrated along the coast. Forty-one percent of China's population, more than half of China's large and medium cities (*da-zhong chengshi*; 大中城市), 70 percent of China's GDP, 84 percent of foreign investment, and 90 percent of China's exports are produced within 200 KM of the Chinese coastline.<sup>52</sup>

Based on the sources consulted for this paper, there seems to be general agreement that the PLA in general and the PLAN in particular should assume greater responsibility for protecting China's expanding economic interests. As two Logistics Command Academy professors wrote in 2007, "The Navy is a necessary investment for a nation to safeguard and develop its overseas trade. A nation's overseas trade requires strong naval support. This positive interaction is the basic rule of sea power development."<sup>53</sup> Also in 2007, a team of authors from the Academy of Military Science and the Dalian Vessel Academy wrote that as China's national interests expand beyond the scope of China's territorial boundaries, "Sea power should adapt to match the requirements of those expanding national interests. Wherever national maritime interests and overseas interests are, sea power should be directed there."<sup>54</sup>

While the PLAN has been tasked with new responsibilities as a result of the *New Historic Missions*, it is important to point out that "territorial integrity" – including the Taiwan issue, as well as the disputed maritime islands and reefs in the East China and the South China Seas – continue to loom large in the PLAN's strategic calculus. "Taiwanese independence forces" (*taidu lilian*; 台独力量) are seen as seriously threatening China's sovereignty and security.<sup>55</sup> Several PLA security analysts believe that without the deterrence of a powerful navy, national reunification will be impossible and that the Taiwan issue presents the greatest danger to regional stability.<sup>56</sup>

In addition to Taiwan, large sections of China's maritime territory remain in dispute. The 2006 AMS volume *Theory of National Security Strategy* emphasizes that roughly half, or 1.5 million km<sup>2</sup> of the approximately 3 million km<sup>2</sup> of maritime territory under China's legal jurisdiction, is in dispute or already controlled by other regional nations.<sup>57</sup> As Dalian Vessel Academy Professor Tang Fuquan lamented in late 2007, "Our island are being occupied, our maritime areas are being cut apart (*haiyang quyue bei fenge*; 海洋区域被分割), and our resources are being plundered."<sup>58</sup>

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<sup>52</sup> Tang Fuquan and Wu Yi, *Ibid*, p. 93.

<sup>53</sup> Lang Danyang and Liu Fenliang, "Hailu zhi Zheng de Lishi Jianshi" (Historical Exploration into the Land-Sea Dispute), *Zhongguo Junshi Kexue*, 2007 no 1, p. 46.

<sup>54</sup> Wang Shumei, Shi Jiazhu, and Xu Mingshun, *Ibid*, p. 142.

<sup>55</sup> Ge Dongsheng, ed., *Ibid*, p. 363.

<sup>56</sup> Liu Shuiming and Chen Lu, "Haiyang Yishi yu Haifang Jianshe" (Sea Consciousness and Maritime Defense Construction), *Nanjing Zhengzhi Xueyuan Xuebao*, 2005, no. 1, p. 84; Tang Fuquan and Wu Yi, *Ibid*, p. 93.

<sup>57</sup> Ge Dongsheng, *Ibid*, p. 223.

<sup>58</sup> Tang Fuquan and Wu Yi, *Ibid*, p. 93.

## Increase the PLAN's strategic status and priority for modernization

Third, the *Historic Missions* have impacted Chinese naval strategy by according the PLAN an increased status as a strategic force. Following the 2002 and 2004 adjustments to the *Military Strategic Guidelines*, PLA Navy authors have begun referring to the PLAN as China's "first line of defense" both for the Chinese homeland as well as for expanding Chinese national interests abroad. These missions require greater investment for the PLAN to perfect its short range operational capabilities and develop new longer-range capabilities.

In 2007 PLAN Political Department Deputy Director Rear Admiral Yao Wenhui argued that, "the PLA's traditional structure as a 'continental military' (*dalu jun*; 大陆军) is unsuitable for the present situation and tasks. [The PLA] must increase its expenditure for navy modernization."<sup>59</sup> Rear Admiral Yao justifies this need for additional investment in navy modernization noting that,

The PLAN is the first line of defense (*shoudang qichong*; 首当其冲) for protecting China's sovereignty, territorial integrity, or maritime rights and interests. Additionally, as China's economy becomes increasingly integrated with the global economy, China's development interests are subject to increasing numbers of security challenges that are difficult to ignore. China's economic center of gravity is located along the coast. Without security of the coastal regions, there can be no economic security. Furthermore China's dependence on the strategic SLOCs that carry trade and energy resources makes protection of these SLOCs an increasingly important concern.<sup>60</sup>

While a PLAN political officer is obviously a biased commentator, one additional PLA Navy author suggested that the PLAN as "first line of defense" remark was first made by Hu Jintao sometime in 2007.<sup>61</sup> As of the time of writing however, it has not been possible to identify any further data on this issue.

What is certain is that in early 2008, Hu Jintao publicly emphasized the need for PLAN transformation (*tuijin zhuanxing*; 推进转型) and equipment modernization.<sup>62</sup> On April 11, 2008, Hu Jintao, accompanied by CMC Vice Chairman Guo Boxiong, PLAN Commander and CMC member Wu Shengli, and PLAN Political Commissar Hu Yanlin, traveled to a military harbor in Sanya, Hainan Province. In a speech to the officers in Sanya, Hu called upon the PLAN to advance PLAN transformation to realize the *New Historic Missions*. He called on the PLAN to:

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<sup>59</sup> Yao Wenhui, *Ibid*, p. 4.

<sup>60</sup> *Ibid*, p. 6.

<sup>61</sup> Lu Hongzhe, *Ibid*. According to that source Hu reportedly stated: "In future wars, the PLAN will serve as the main operational force and the first line of defense (*shouxian qichong*; 首先其冲) in any conflict involving China's sovereignty, territorial integrity, or maritime rights and interests... militarily, the PLAN's comprehensive operational capabilities are intimately linked with the expansion of national interests. Diplomatically, the strategic uses of the PLAN are closely linked to China's emergence as a great power and the preservation of world peace."

<sup>62</sup> Tang Zhongping, "Hu Jintao: Tuidong Jianshe Youhao Youkuai Fazhan" (Hu Jintao: Promote Rapid and Effective Navy Building), *PLA Daily*, April 11, 2008, p. 1, [http://www.chinamil.com.cn/site1/xwpdxw/2008-04/11/content\\_1200536.htm](http://www.chinamil.com.cn/site1/xwpdxw/2008-04/11/content_1200536.htm), [Accessed July 7, 2008]

Advance military combat preparations, quicken the pace of navy modernization, and strengthen the PLAN's military capabilities to fully execute its missions and tasks. The PLAN must strengthen its awareness of this opportunity (*qianghua jiyu yishi*; 强化机遇意识), broaden its strategic field of vision (*tuokuan zhanlue shiye*; 拓宽战略视野), focus on the capabilities required to fight and win local naval wars under informationized conditions, continuously strengthen the ability to respond to multiple types of security threats (*duozhong anquan weixie*; 多种安全威胁) and complete increasing types of military objectives (*duoyang hua junshi renwu*; 多样化军事任务).<sup>63</sup>

According to one PLAN senior captain, this “more rapid transformation” refers to key Navy modernization issues that affect the PLAN's ability to implement the *Historic Missions*. These include:<sup>64</sup>

- Transforming the PLAN from a mechanized to an informationized force
- Transforming the PLAN's comprehensive operations capabilities (*zonghe zuozhan nengli*; 综合作战能力) from offshore defense (*jinhai fangyu*; 近海防御) to an open ocean defense (*yuanhai fangwei*; 远海防卫)
- Increasing the PLAN's informationization level

### **Increased emphasis on non-traditional security and military operations other than war**

The *New Historic Missions* has also increased the importance of military operations other than war (MOOTW) including fighting terrorism, and conducting peacekeeping, and humanitarian assistance operations as key PLA missions. According to Academy of Military Science researcher and Chinese Defense White Paper author Senior Colonel Chen Zhou:

China's armed forces must not only respond to traditional security threats, they must also deal with non-traditional security threats; they must not only protect the security of national territory (*guotu anquan*; 国土安全) they must also protect the security of China's overseas interests (*haiwai liyi*; 海外利益); they must not only provide stability for national development (*guojia fazhan wending*; 国家发展稳定), they must also facilitate peaceful development for the world (*shijie heping fazhan*; 世界和平发展).<sup>65</sup>

The *Historic Missions*, is based on the new domestic and international security environment and China's changed thinking about the role and uses of military forces. As a result of this new thinking, the PLAN now places a higher priority on non-traditional

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<sup>63</sup> Tang Zhongping, *Ibid*.

<sup>64</sup> Lu Hongzhe, *Ibid*.

<sup>65</sup> Chen Hui and Wang Jingguo, “*Jiji Fangyu Junshi Zhanlue de Tuijin*” (Development of the Active Defense Military Strategy), *Liaowang*, July 28, 2008, No. 30, pp. 22-23, Available at: <http://news.sohu.com/20080728/n258419259.shtml> [Accessed August 12, 2008] As of early 2008, Senior Colonel Chen Zhou was serving as a researcher at the Academy of Military Science Warfare Theory and Strategic Studies Department (*zhanzheng lilun he zhanlue yanjiu bu*; 战争理论和战略研究部).

security and MOOTW.<sup>66</sup> The authoritative Academy of Military Science volume, the *Science of Naval Training*, states that MOOTW (*fei zhanzheng xingdong*; 非战争行动) has already become an important component of PLAN military operations and outlines five main types of MOOTW that the PLAN is training for:<sup>67</sup>

- Actions conducted domestically during peacetime; this includes emergency natural disaster relief as well as closely coordinated actions with People's Armed Police Coast Guard units in support of law enforcement organizations (*zhifa jigou*; 执法机构) to combat smuggling, arrest drug dealers, etc.
- Demonstrations of armed force and military deterrence
- Actions focused on preserving national and social stability, participating in maritime security cooperation (*haishang anquan hezuo*; 海上安全合作) including peacekeeping actions (*weihe xingdong*; 维和行动) and counter-terrorism actions (*fan kongbu xingdong*; 反恐怖行动)
- Military diplomacy
- At-sea search and rescue actions including those conducted independently, in cooperation with other services and branches (*jun bingzhong*; 军兵种), civilian forces, or international forces

Non-traditional security missions are also emphasized as a key means for realizing the fourth historic mission: maintaining world peace and stability. Academy of Military Science researcher and Chinese Defense White Paper author Senior Colonel Chen Zhou stated that “as a military with an 81-year history the PLA must go out into the world (*zouxiang shijie*; 走向世界) to increase our confidence, dispel others' misconceptions, learn from others, and most importantly, to effectively protect world peace and spur common development.”<sup>68</sup> The PLAN has recently undertaken several initiatives aimed at preserving world peace and maintaining a favorable regional security environment.<sup>69</sup> As PLAN Political Commissar Hu Yanlin noted in 2006:

These activities have developed from participating and organizing international search and rescue to participating in large-scale joint naval exercises (*lianhe junshi yanxi*; 联合军事演习). The purpose of naval diplomacy has evolved from isolated ship visits to ship visits coordinated with larger political and diplomatic activities. In terms of content, these activities have evolved from working against traditional security threats to working against an expanding number of non-traditional security threats including piracy and multinational criminal organizations.<sup>70</sup>

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<sup>66</sup> Zhang Yongyi, Ed., *Haijun Junshi Xunlian Xue* (The Science of Naval Training), Academy of Military Science Press, Beijing, 2006, p. 250.

<sup>67</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>68</sup> Chen Hui and Wang Jingguo, *Ibid.*, pp. 22-23.

<sup>69</sup> Hu Yanlin, *Ibid.*, p. 45.

<sup>70</sup> *Ibid.*

## Debating a transition from “offshore” to “open ocean” defense

Finally, the *Historic Missions* may mark the beginning of a debate about transitioning PLA Navy strategy from “offshore” to “open ocean” defense. Throughout the 1990s, many Chinese security analysts’ writing about the PLAN’s operational range focused on the necessity of transforming the PLAN into an “offshore” (*jinhai*; 近海) navy as opposed to a coastal (*jin’an*; 近岸) navy. “Offshore” is a problematic concept because different authors use the term “offshore” in reference to different geographic areas. For example, Chinese authors have used the term “offshore” in reference to a PLAN operational zone demarcated variously by the 200-350 nm Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ), the first or second island chain, or beyond. As the PLA National Defense University volume *Science of Service Strategy* (*junzhong zhanlue xue*; 军种战略学) notes however, “offshore” is most appropriately understood as a strategic, rather than a geographic concept.

The operational range (*zuozhan fanwei*; 作战范围) of the offshore defense includes the offshore sea area (*jinhai haiyu*; 近海海域) defined as the area of the sea that is under China’s legitimate jurisdiction as well as any area that can be used by an enemy to threaten China’s security. The strategic range of PLAN operations is any area where operations must be conducted to protect the entirety of China’s “maritime national territory (*haiyang guotu*; 海洋国土),” safeguard national unity, territorial integrity, maritime rights and interests, and conduct strategic control over “hot spot” sea zones around the boundaries of Chinese territory. As China’s strategic environment evolves and the PLAN’s strategic capabilities are enhanced, the future range of “offshore operations” could be expanded as required to effectively guarantee China’s national security.<sup>71</sup>

There is increasing evidence to suggest that Chinese security analysts are currently engaged in a debate about whether the “offshore” strategic concept should be modified or possibly replaced by a new “open ocean” (*yuanhai*; 远海 or *yuanyang*; 远洋) concept. This new concept, some argue, would allow the PLAN to fulfill its responsibilities under the *Historic Missions* and protect China’s increasing “open ocean” interests. A February 2007 *Junshi Kexue* article defined these “open ocean” interests to include energy assets in the Persian Gulf, Africa, and Latin America; SLOCs between China and the Middle East; more than 1,800 Chinese fishing vessels operating on the open oceans and off the waters of 40 different nations; ocean resources in international waters; and the security of overseas Chinese.<sup>72</sup>

A recent article by Dalian Vessel Academy professor Tang Fuquan notes that while the “offshore defense” concept remained useful throughout the 1980s and 1990s, since the new century Hu Jintao has been emphasizing that “the PLAN must continue increasing its operational capabilities within the offshore sea area, [but] it must also gradually begin to transition to open ocean defense (*yuanhai fangwei*; 远海防卫) and develop open ocean mobility operations capabilities (*yuanhai jidong zuozhan nengli*; 远海机动作战能力).”<sup>73</sup>

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<sup>71</sup> Huo Xiaoyong, ed., *Junzhong Zhanlue Xue (The Science of Service Strategy)*, NDU Press, Beijing, 2006, p. 242. See also: Tang Fuquan and Wu Yi, *Ibid*, p. 93.

<sup>72</sup> Wang Shumei, Shi Jiazhu, and Xu Mingshun, *Ibid*, pp. 139-146.

<sup>73</sup> Tang Fuquan and Wu Yi, *Ibid*, p. 93.



PLAN Political Department Deputy Director Rear Admiral Yao Wenhui has argued that developing open ocean defensive capabilities is vital for protecting China's national security and development:

The offshore area is the zone of competing national interests between China and its neighbors. Increasing the PLAN's offshore comprehensive operational capabilities to protect stability and security in the maritime direction is a key component of Navy modernization. As modern PLAN weapons increase in range and precision and the naval battlefield expands from the offshore to the open ocean, the development of open ocean mobile capabilities will become increasingly important for protecting national security and development.<sup>74</sup>

Similarly a professor from the Naval Command Academy Strategic Research Office recently noted that the PLAN is attempting to transform itself from a regional offshore navy (*jinhai quyu xing*; 近海区域型) into a regional open-ocean navy (*yuanhai quyu xing*; 远海区域型).<sup>75</sup> This professor defined a regional open-ocean navy as one that, "can accomplish strategic operational tasks within a specific period of time in specific open ocean areas long distances from its territory, but cannot have a major role anywhere in the world."<sup>76</sup> According to one 2007 *Junshi Kexue* article:

PLAN open ocean capabilities (*yuanyang zuozhan nengli*; 远洋作战能力) include ...the ability to protect strategic SLOCs and preserve freedom of movement (*xingdong ziyou*; 行动自由) in the vast ocean space (*guangkuo de haiyang kongjian*; 广阔的海洋空间). These open ocean capabilities mainly include: maritime patrols, surface and subsurface operational capabilities, island and reef offensive/defensive operational capabilities, seaboard assault (*dui'an gongji*; 对岸攻击) capabilities, at-sea operations command (*haishang xingdong zhihui*; 海上行动指挥), and comprehensive support capabilities.<sup>77</sup>

In 2004 Naval Command Academy professor Quan Jinfu outlined a three-phase transition that would transform the PLAN from an "offshore" to an "open ocean" navy. While it is unclear whether this transition reflects official policy or is merely professor Quan's personal views, it provides one example of how a PLAN open ocean strategic concept could evolve:

- Step 1: The state will continue increasing its level of investment and quicken the pace of Navy modernization. This will allow the PLAN's operational zone to cover the entire offshore sea area (*jinhai de quanbu haiyu*; 近海的全部海域). With continued financial support from the state, the PLAN must quicken the pace of Navy modernization and develop the capabilities to deal with these offshore threats to China's interests.
- Step 2: As the development of China's economy becomes increasingly reliant on maritime rights and interests and maritime industries, the "boundary" (*jiangyu*; 疆域) of China's national interests will gradually expand from the offshore (*jinhai*;

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<sup>74</sup> Yao Wenhui, *Ibid*, p. 7.

<sup>75</sup> Quan Jinfu, *Ibid*, p. 81.

<sup>76</sup> *Ibid*, p. 82.

<sup>77</sup> Lu Xue, "Dui Tigao Jundui Luxing Lishi Shiming Nengli de Jidian Sikao" (Views on Improving the Armed Forces' Ability to Execute the Historic Missions), *Zhongguo Junshi Kexue*, 2007 no 5, p. 107.

近海) to local sea areas beyond the offshore (*jinhai wai de jubu haiyu*; 近海外的局部海域). To effectively protect these expanded “boundaries”, the PLAN will utilize sustained and increasing investment from the state to extend its strategic defensive scope beyond the first island chain.

- Step 3: During the third and final step, continued large-scale support from national economic development will allow the PLAN to enter the ranks of the world’s major navies. During this final phase, the PLAN strategic defensive scope (*zhanlue fangwei fanwei*; 战略防卫范围) will completely cover certain open ocean areas (*moxie yuanyang haiyu*; 某些远洋海域) that involve Chinese key strategic interests. At that time the PLAN will possess the capabilities to act independently or jointly to prevent any violation of Chinese interests on the vast oceans (*guangkuo de haiyu*; 广阔的海域).<sup>78</sup>

## IV. Implications

In response to new domestic and international developments, the Central Military Commission has twice adjusted China’s national military strategy – the *Military Strategic Guidelines* – in the past six years. An analysis of China’s naval strategy during this period reveals that PLAN strategy is evolving to include:

- Expanding roles and missions for protecting China’s increasingly important maritime and overseas economic interests
- Raising the PLAN’s status as a strategic service and priority for modernization
- Debating a potential strategic transition from “offshore” to “open ocean” defense
- Emphasizing military operations other than war (MOOTW) including fighting terrorism, and conducting peacekeeping and humanitarian assistance operations, in addition to combat missions, as key PLA missions

Over the next five-ten years, the PLAN’s roles and missions will likely continue to expand barring any major disruptions to the global economic system that could slow the pace of China’s growing national interests. These expanding missions are both a cause and a result of the PLAN’s increased status as a strategic force. Taken together, the PLAN’s expanded missions and rising status suggest that there will be increased or at least sustained high levels of investment for modernizing PLAN doctrine, equipment, and systems. Additionally, the PLA Navy fielded today is the result of fundamental decisions of military strategy reached in 1993.<sup>79</sup> The implication here is that it may be another five-ten years before we begin to see the observable effects of the 2002 and 2004 adjustments that assigned higher strategic priority, additional resources, and new missions to the PLAN.

Next, it appears that the PLA has begun a debate about adjusting its current naval strategy from “offshore defense” to “open ocean defense” (*yuanyang fangwei*; 远洋防卫). It is

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<sup>78</sup> Quan Jinfu, *Ibid*, p. 85.

<sup>79</sup> See: David M. Finkelstein, “China’s National Military Strategy: An Overview of the ‘Military Strategic Guidelines’”, in Roy Kamphausen and Andrew Scobell, Eds, *Right-Sizing the People’s Liberation Army: Exploring the Contours of China’s Military*, U.S. Army War College Press, September 2007

important to note that this debate still appears to be in the conceptual phase. Current PLAN writings state that, twenty-two years after officially adopting its “offshore defense” strategy, the PLAN still has not acquired all of the capabilities envisioned under that strategy. It will still most likely be years before the CMC officially adjusts PLAN strategy from “offshore” to “open ocean” defense. Even when that official transition is announced, “open ocean” defense, like “offshore” defense before it, will probably remain an aspirational capability for years if not decades.

The significance of this potential shift to “open ocean” defense is difficult to assess because, similar to their use of the term “offshore,” the PLAN does not explicitly define the geographical demarcation of “open oceans.” Some PLAN authors describe “open ocean” defense in terms of China’s regional interests, suggesting it is a concept focused primarily on East and Southeast Asia. Other PLAN officers and strategists speak in much more sweeping terms about the role of rising Chinese interests in the Middle East, Africa, and Latin America in the PLAN’s “open ocean” defense. As “open ocean” defense has not yet been adopted as official PLAN strategy, the exact details of what this strategy would entail are probably under current review in Beijing.

Finally, the PLAN is likely to continue developing the capabilities required for conducting MOOTW and responding to non-traditional security threats. This is both a legitimate policy response to rising non-traditional security challenges in the post-September 11<sup>th</sup> world as well as a policy choice by Beijing to help sensitize regional powers to a rising PLA Navy.

In conclusion, it is important to continue monitoring adjustments to China’s *Military Strategic Guidelines* to better understand the methods and objectives of China’s future naval strategy. Tracking the drivers and outputs of adjustments to the *Guidelines* reveals clear and unambiguous information concerning China’s intentions for modernizing its forces and the ways it is most likely to use those increasing capabilities. In the case of PLA Navy strategy and development rationales, this analysis of recent changes to the *Military Strategic Guidelines* has shown that the PLAN is modernizing in response to a diverse array of domestic and international security considerations including rising economic interdependence and perceived changes in the nature of warfare.

# **Chinese Maritime Claims and US Perspectives**

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## **Introduction**

In most policy and political circles, the term “straight baselines” almost never elicits a response, much less an understanding of their impacts on international shipping. So too, the term “EEZ” is not well understood and is almost never associated with the resource rights which are associated with this all-important Law of the Sea (LOS) concept.

Global trade flows are absolutely dependent on the free movement of commerce. As a region, Asia is predominantly a maritime region because the marine environment plays host to most international commerce and is the storehouse for many of the region’s natural resources especially fisheries and oil and gas. It is not lost on an Asian country that much of their future wealth is derived from their ability to access and use the marine environment. Many of the region’s states have, over time, made it a practice to make and then enforce excessive maritime claims by misusing “straight baselines,” which have the practical impact of grabbing significant ocean resources. This paper will examine the legal aspects of this “ocean grab” and attempt to trace their impacts on world economies and on regional stability. A primary focus will be on the disputes involving China (PRC and Taiwan) and other regional players and how those particular disputes have impacts on states that are not directly involved in the conflict or globally. After a short review of the areas of conflict, some options will be offered on the role the United States can and should play to get these conflicts resolved in a peaceful manner.

## **2. Regional Interests.**

America has long maintained close economic cooperation with the Asia-Pacific region. Since the early 1990s, US trade with the Asia-Pacific region has exceeded that with Europe. Admiral Charles Larson, the former Commander-in-Chief of the Pacific Command, projected that "our economic future lies in this region." At a recent meeting of ASEAN ministers in Singapore, Secretary of State Rice recalled that two way trade between the United States and the ASEAN countries topped \$171 billion in 2007. Those ten countries represent the United States’ sixth largest export market and represent some of the most rapidly growing and dynamic economies in the world.” Additionally, American bilateral

trade with China in that same period was nearly \$400 billion. China is now one of the most important markets for U.S. exports: in 2007, U.S. exports to China totaled \$65.2 billion. During that same period, U.S. bilateral trade with Japan was approximately \$208 billion. Two-way goods trade between the U.S. and Korea was valued at about \$72 billion in 2005 although that trade is increasing at an especially brisk pace.

Bilateral trade figures tell only part of the story. "The shipping lanes are getting busier," reports the Wall Street Journal, "not just from Asia to North America and Europe, but within Asia<sup>1</sup>." Based on maritime trade and navigation freedom considerations, eight international regions are listed as "US Lifelines and Transit Regions" by the U.S. Department of Defense. Three of these eight regions are located in the Asia-Pacific: the Southwest Asian Seas, with the Malacca and Lombok Straits among others and sea lanes of communication (SLOCs) passing the Spratly Islands; the Northeast Asian Seas with SLOCs important for access to Japan, Korea, China and Russia; and the Southwest Pacific with important SLOC access to Australia. Owing to the burgeoning trade between America and the Asia-Pacific region and the fact that some of the world's most important SLOCs are located in the Asia-Pacific region, maintaining freedom of navigation in the high seas and ensuring safety of SLOCs are vital interests of the US in this region. As relates to China, the Department of State articulates that the long term US strategy towards that country is summarized as:

- Maintaining sustainable growth without large trade imbalances;
- Continued opening of markets to trade, competition, and investment;
- Cooperation on energy security, energy efficiency, and the environmental and the health impacts of energy emissions.

Clearly, those same goals apply to all other countries in the Asia Pacific Region. Australia, for example, describes its enduring strategic interests as follows:

- Avoidance of destabilising strategic competition developing between the United States, China and Japan as the power relationships between the three evolve and change.

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<sup>1</sup> Evan Ramstad, Korean Shipbuilders Take Novel Construction Tack: Booming Business Inspires New Methods to Make Boats; Thinking Outside the Dock, Wall St. J., June 12, 2007, at A8

- Maintenance of a benign environment in South East Asia, particularly maritime South East Asia, which respects the territorial integrity of all states.
- Prevention of the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction (WMD).
- The free movement of shipping between major trading blocs all over the world is vital to the economic wellbeing of the Asia-Pacific region, while the majority of the states within it are dependent upon the uninterrupted passage of oil supplies, particularly from the Middle East, for their very existence.<sup>2</sup>

### **3. US Ocean Policy Interests**

The three U.S. goals with respect to China of sustainable growth, continued market access, and cooperation in environmental and resource fields are directly tied to the oceans policies of China and other regional actors. Free access to the world's oceans is the bedrock of international trade, which in this context consists of the movements of people (via ships, aircraft), information (through seabed cables), commodities, and finished products. Also, key to those three interests, at a macro level, is the ability of the world's military and security forces to be able to traverse the world's oceans and littoral areas, to conduct presence operations, law enforcement activities, and military activities to suppress terrorists<sup>3</sup> and pirates since commercial maritime activities (and those of their underwriters) will only flourish if there is a safe and stable security environment. Finally, the preservation of the marine environment and the promotion of sustainable fisheries and other marine resources (including oil and gas) depends on state behavior which

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<sup>2</sup> [http://www.navy.gov.au/w/images/Amd\\_chapter4.pdf](http://www.navy.gov.au/w/images/Amd_chapter4.pdf)

<sup>3</sup> The gaps and seams in ocean governance have been exploited in the past. At one point in 2001, the bin Laden organization had direct ownership and charter hire of a fleet of ships (23 vessels) that were registered in flag of convenience (FOC) states. In February 2002 Coast Guard Commandant James Loy and Captain Robert Ross, in an article titled "Global Trade: America's Achilles Heel," noted that the shadowy Flag of Convenience registry system (which is not accountable to community interests) provides safe haven for marginal ship owners as well as criminals, smugglers, and terrorists to exploit the security and regulatory loophole to advance their interests. The fact that bin Laden exploited the system in the past raises concerns that terrorists could do so again since the economic and regulatory rules that favored unrestricted (and unregulated) use of the high seas have not changed since 9/11. In mid-July 2002, the Canadian Navy managed to capture two suspected al Qaeda members operating a speedboat in the Gulf of Oman (USS Cole scenario). This was later followed by a small boat attack on the French supertanker Limburg off the Yemeni coast in October 2002, by suspected terrorists. And, then there was the bombing of a super ferry by the al Qaeda-linked Abu Sayyaf group in Manila harbor in February of 2004, which resulted in the death of more than a hundred passengers.

conforms to general international law and the 1982 Law of the Sea (LOS) Convention<sup>4</sup> - - to include concomitant access of marine security forces to ensure, on behalf of the international community, that the legal norms are being upheld.

There are economic costs associated with conflicting claims. The importance of these waterways to regional trade is clear. In a study which focused on the effects of intensified competition (and perhaps violence) associated with the conflicting claims in the South China Sea, CNA Analysts noted:

With over 15 percent of the world's cross-border trade transiting the South China Sea region each year, the importance of these sea lanes to international trade seems at least as significant....The level of trade transiting the South China Sea SLOCs is high largely because these are the quickest and cheapest safe routes from Europe or the Middle East to East or Southeast Asia. If these routes were no longer cheap or safe, ships would use other routes, such as the Straits of Lombok and Makassar, or even sailing around Australia (at considerable additional cost)<sup>5</sup>

That same 1996 CNA study, *Chokepoints: Maritime Economic Concerns in Southeast Asia*, addressed the feasibility of using alternate trade routes in the South China Sea region and concluded that a change in shipping patterns from a partial or total closure of major sea lanes in the South China Sea would result in a sharp increase in freight costs and potential shortage of shipping capacity in the short term. It also concluded that this increase would level out, resulting in higher freight rates (as a result of longer delivery times), an eventual increase in shipping capacity, and some damage to the economies in the region<sup>6</sup>. Given the fragile and interdependent nature of the world's economies – especially today – the impacts of added fuel, insurance, and delay costs are not easily weathered by the world's economies.

### **U.S. Policy and Excessive Maritime Claims**

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<sup>4</sup> Even though the United States has yet to ratify the 1982 LOS Convention, since 1988 U.S. Policy has been to regard the LOS Convention as reflecting customary international law – save for the original provisions dealing with deep seabed mining. PROCLAMATION 5928 issued by President Reagan on Dec. 27, 1988.

<http://www.oceanlaw.org/index.php?name=News&catid=&topic=10>

<sup>5</sup> Noer and Gregory: "Chokepoints: Maritime Economic Concerns in Southeast Asia." CNA Publications No. CRM 2796000700 and 2796000709/. (1996) See also, [http://hormuz.robertstrausscenter.org/other\\_chokepoints](http://hormuz.robertstrausscenter.org/other_chokepoints)

<sup>6</sup> Kivlehan and Rosen, "The South China Sea: A Regional Assessment. CNA Publication No. CRM D0003145.A1 of March 2001.

In assessing the need for new policy or cooperative efforts by the United States to dampen excessive maritime claims in this region, it is first appropriate to articulate the desired end-state in terms of international oceans policy. The principal goals can be summarized as follows:

- **Public order on the high seas predicated on LOS norms**
- **Plugging gaps in the current regimes either through international legislation or the resolution of disputes using rules of law and formal dispute settlement mechanisms;**
- **Regional/international enforcing mechanisms versus unilateralism**
- **Financially and legally responsible owners and operators of vessels and strong flag state control to prevent illegal activities by shipowners and operators**
- **Market incentives to eliminate “free riders” that pollute or create hazardous conditions on the seas that endanger other maritime users or coastal states.**

The modern embodiment of oceans policy is the 1982 Law of the Sea Convention which the United States declares to be reflective of customary international law even though it has not yet ratified the Convention. However, there are gaps in the current text, and portions of the legal text are quite obscure, because the use of compromise language was necessary to secure global agreement.

McDougal and Burke’s seminal work *The Public Order of the Oceans*<sup>7</sup> postulates that public order of the oceans is predicated on “the general community interest in both shareable, inclusive use and authority and non-shareable, exclusive use and authority, and the projection of ... appropriate principles and procedures for the securing of all interests.” To preserve the opposing interests of coastal and non-coastal interests, the 1982 Law of the Sea (LOS) Convention was negotiated to codify the balancing of interests and to establish jurisdictional zones between individual, nation-state, and “international” rights to ensure the protection of the marine environment, public order, and the responsible exploitation of resources.

The LOS Convention was negotiated during the height of the Cold War in which there were basically three competing factions: (a) major maritime states like the United States and the USSR that wanted broad rights to

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<sup>7</sup> Yale University Press (1962)



ocean access; (b) the G-77<sup>8</sup> were most concerned with gaining access to marine resources and revenues commensurate with their population size; and (c) coastal states who were interested in being able to exclusively exploit and protect their coastal resources and be able to hold the navies of the major maritime powers at arms length. Issues of importance to the U.S. Navy—such as transit passage, military overflight, high seas exercises, and unrestricted submerged operations—were at the forefront of the US negotiating position and, in this regard, the 1982 LOS Convention was a great success for the U.S.

In the 30 or so years since the LOS Convention was negotiated, gaps and seams have emerged—creating general security issues that are in need of correction. Among them:

- Lack of effective sanctions on state actors and non-state actors who continue to use legitimate or flag of convenience registrations, thereby creating a legal “no man’s land” which can be exploited by terrorists, transnational criminals—including the smugglers of illegal migrants—and potentially the traffickers of WMD;
- Archaic and insufficient legal protections for the international community when it comes to establishing universally enforceable criminal sanctions versus individuals, groups, or states that use the high seas for nefarious purposes;
- A failure of international institutions, like the International Maritime Organization, the Continental Shelf Commission, or other LOS institutions to address the environmental and safety impacts of shipping on coastal states, adjudicate fisheries management concerns, or establish effective mandatory mechanisms to adjudicate disputes; and
- Insufficient concerted action in both the commercial marketplace and among regional states to use market-based approaches to punish those coastal states (and ships that fly their flag) that do not conform their behavior to accepted norms as set forth in the LOS Convention.

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<sup>8</sup> The Group of 77 is a loose coalition of developing nations at the United Nations who seek to promote their members' collective economic interests and create an enhanced joint negotiating capacity in the United Nations. The G-77 was created in 1964; today there are 130 countries.

The preceding gaps and seams in ocean governance have created a climate which emboldens states to make and enforce excessive maritime claims for long and short term economic and security reasons. This practice runs counter to longstanding US Policy with respect to maritime claims by coastal states to sovereignty, sovereign rights, or jurisdiction over ocean areas that are inconsistent with the terms of the LOS Convention. This is what we mean by "excessive maritime claims." They are illegal in international law. Since World War II, more than 80 coastal states have asserted various claims that threaten the rights of other states to use the oceans. These excessive maritime claims include, but are not limited to, claims inconsistent with the legal division of the ocean and superadjacent airspace reflected in the LOS Convention."<sup>9</sup> Excessive claims may include:

- improperly drawn baselines for measuring maritime claims;
- territorial sea claims greater than 12 miles;<sup>3</sup>
- other claims to jurisdiction over maritime areas in excess of 12 miles, such as security zones, that purport to restrict non-resource related high seas freedoms;
- contiguous zone claims at variance with Article 33 of the LOS Convention;
- exclusive economic zone (EEZ) claims inconsistent with Part V of the LOS Convention;
- continental shelf claims not in conformance with Part VI of the LOS Convention; and
- claims requiring advance notification or authorization for innocent passage of warships and naval auxiliaries through the territorial sea, international straits, archipelagic sea lanes; or EEZ or applying discriminatory requirements to such vessels

U.S. policy has been unchanged for decades with respect to excessive maritime claims and the US has continued to diplomatically protest and, as appropriate, operationally assert its navigation and overflight rights on a worldwide basis in a manner that is consistent with the LOS Convention. All of these activities are conducted in a low key manner and are undergirded by the 1982 LOS Convention. The U.S. policy goal has been to "shift maritime political disputes from being a cause for violence

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<sup>9</sup> US Department of State, Limits of the Sea, No. 112 of March 1992.  
<http://www.state.gov/documents/organization/58381.pdf>

and naval warfare to a legal based order, approaching the vision of Myres S. McDougal and William T. Burke of a "public order of the oceans."<sup>10</sup>

The US policy of diplomatically and operationally seeking the rollback of excessive maritime claims is also predicated on a larger interest in maintaining public order on the oceans. History has shown time and again that unilateral maritime claims are destabilizing and can often lead to violence. In the 1950s NATO came under considerable stress from highly contentious "Cod Wars" concerning British access to fishing areas off the coast of Iceland. In 1992 the Peruvian Air Force fired on a USAF C-130 aircraft, killing one airman, for *inter alia*, straying into disputed airspace. In March 1995, Canada pursued and captured the Spanish boat Estai fishing for Greenland 28 nautical miles outside of Canada's 200-mile EEZ. Spain and the European Union accused Canada of piracy, while Canada says it was legally trying to preserve its fish stocks.

Closer to "home," Japan and China are locked in territorial disputes (and associated EEZ delimitation) involving the Diaoyu/Senkaku Islands in the East China Sea (described in greater detail below). What is at stake in the overlapping/conflicting EEZ claims is access to an estimated 300,000 square kilometers, beneath which lie potentially vast untapped gas and oil reserves. Nearly 90% of the world's remaining oil and gas resources are in the seabed and the East China Sea (especially the Xihu Trough) is one of the last remaining unexploited repositories of oil and natural gas which Japan and China would love to be able to exploit.

In September 2005 China dispatched a five-ship surface action group (SAG) to the waters surrounding its gas and oil platforms in the East China Sea. Although the SAG's presence was perfectly legal, the situation was exacerbated when one of the Chinese frigates reportedly trained an anti-aircraft gun on a Japanese maritime patrol plane that was flying a reconnaissance patrol in the area.

In addition to violence, one can reasonably expect that the pendent disputes in the East and South China Sea can spawn other types of responses, including:

- Unilateral action by any claimant to assert sovereignty over disputed territory, including:
  - building or upgrading of existing structures on disputed territory;

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<sup>10</sup> Kraska, J. "The Law of the Sea Convention: A National Security Success – Strategic Mobility through the Rule of Law." 39 Geo. Wash. Int'l L. Rev. 543, 556 (2007) (Citing Hans Morgenthau).

- Unrestricted/unmanaged fishing in disputed waters
- Unilateral legislation which superficially is aimed at solving a regional problem but is, in fact, designed to help consolidate the claim, such as:
  - Establishment of fishing moratoria
  - Establishment of “intensive” fisheries or anti-piracy patrols which interfere with lawful users;
  - Establishment of temporary zones restricting all maritime activities in disputed areas
- New prospecting for or extraction of oil and gas.
- Bilateral negotiations resulting in two countries reaching an agreement at the expense of a third party claimant

In the 1970s, there were nearly 20 states that unilaterally asserted territorial sea claims that exceeded 3nm (or the 12NM established in the pending LOS Convention). About a third of those claims were rolled back once the 1982 LOS Convention went into force. More have been rolled back since then. However, there remain more than one hundred illegal, excessive coastal state claims worldwide that threaten to impair vital navigation and overflight rights and freedoms. A failure of governments, including China and Taiwan, to roll back their claims to strictly conform to the Convention sets the stage for potential violent confrontations, given recent reports of violence surrounding various disputed claims

#### **4. Outstanding Maritime Disputes Involving China**

The United States has longstanding differences with the PRC on its maritime claims. Those claims can be grouped into those pertaining to (a) the continental coastline; (b) non-territorial baseline claims in the South China Sea (SCS); (c) operational restrictions and (d) territorial claims which do not directly involve the US but which could have an adverse impact on regional stability. All of these claims can impact freedom of navigation. U.S. responses to the PRC’s claims have been diplomatic coupled with limited operational assertions under the Freedom of Navigation (FON) program. However, most Chinese maritime claims tend to receive less attention in the press concerning day-to-day U.S. diplomacy than trade, human rights, and military expansion issues. Since almost all littoral nations in Southeast Asia maintain excessive maritime claims which could greatly hamper military and commercial activities of the United States in Asian seas, it is necessary that excessive

claims issues remain in the forefront, with other US security issues in the Asia-Pacific region.

## **Major Territorial Conflicts**

### **(1). The Senkaku/Diaoyu Islands**

Sovereignty of the Senkaku (the Chinese call them the Diaoyu) Islands are claimed by both Japan and China. The areas offshore of these uninhabited islands are projected to have significant oil and gas resources and are near key international shipping routes. These eight uninhabited islands and barren rocks have a land area of only 6.3 square kilometers. The islands are approximately 120 nm northeast of Taiwan, 200 nm east of the Chinese mainland, and 200 nm southeast of Okinawa. Most of the islets are clustered around the largest island, Uotsuri/Diaoyu. The practical effect of this dispute is that the Japanese EEZ claim (apart from the resource issues) could place some restrictions on PRC maritime activities (especially fisheries) originating in Northern China and potentially shift that shipping traffic through the Taiwan Straits.<sup>11</sup>

Japan asserts that it has claimed the islands as official Japanese territory since 1895. That claim of “first discovery” was predicated on an official survey which determined that the islands were unoccupied. The Government of Japan made a Cabinet Decision on 14 January 1895 to erect a marker on the Islands to formally incorporate the Senkaku Islands into the territory of Japan. These islands were neither part of Taiwan nor part of the Pescadores Islands which were ceded to Japan from the Qing Dynasty of China in accordance with Article II of the Treaty of Shimonoseki which came into effect in May of 1895.

According to China, historical records detailing the discovery and geographical feature of these islands date back to the year 1403. For several centuries they were allegedly administered as part of Taiwan and have always been used exclusively by Chinese fishermen as an operational base. According to the Chinese, in 1874, Japan took the Liu Chiu (Ryukyu) Islands from China by force. Diaoyu, however, remained under the administration of Taiwan, a part of China. Further complicating matters, in World War II the United States used some of the islands for bombing practice. In 1972 the United States returned the

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<sup>11</sup> Strictly speaking, these EEZ claims should not result in a diminution of navigation and overflight rights. However, since EEZ claims often include illegal navigation and overflight restrictions. Consequently regional states have a valid reason for being apprehensive.

Liu Chiu (Ryukyu) islands, along with Okinawa, to Japan. This return was protested by the PRC.

Irrespective of which territorial claim is superior, there is the added question of whether all of the Islands constitute “Islands” or “Rocks.” If the former, the country is entitled to an EEZ and continental shelf. If they are considered rocks which cannot sustain human habitation, then the country is only entitled to a territorial sea under Art. 121(3) of the LOS Convention. This issue, of course, complicates the question of which islands are entitled to an EEZ and continental shelf (and the concomitant seabed oil and gas resources) and how those ocean areas are to be delimited vis-à-vis the EEZ and Continental Shelf claims of China.

Irrespective of the merits of these claims to the island territories, and the adjacent ocean territories, the United States has maintained that it takes no position on the sovereignty of the islands but wishes the parties to resolve these disputes peacefully. In the past few years there have been a number of provocative incidents involving Japanese, PLAN, and Republic of China military vessels. In June of 2008, a Japanese warship allegedly intentionally rammed and sank a Taiwanese fishing vessel. Whether these incidents are predicated on false assumptions regarding navigational freedoms, some commentators are claiming that the Japanese claims are part of a “sea denial” campaign which is designed to close off the PRCs normal sea passage routes and, of course, access to significant seabed resources.<sup>12</sup>

## **(2) South China Sea Territorial Claims<sup>13</sup>**

China claims the Spratly and Paracel island groups en toto. These claims are predicated on ancient historical records which show that the Chinese have visited the islands since the time of the Western and Eastern Han Dynasties and that the islands were a regular way station for Chinese mariners who “occupied” the larger islands and “discovered” new ones. China has commissioned various legal specialists to more fully document that claim based on historic title. That title is based on reasonably extensive written records which were compiled by Chinese navigators dating back to the Qing dynasty (18th century). The first formal (in a Western sense) evidence of the claim was a June 26, 1887, Frontier Boundary Agreement between China and France relating to the Gulf of Tonkin and South China Sea, which arguably gave China the title to the Paracels and Spratlys. French Navy and French diplomatic activity from

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<sup>12</sup> Hsiung, James “Sea Power, Law of the Sea and China-Japan East China Sea “Resource War.” Unpublished paper on file with Author. Oct 9, 2005.

<sup>13</sup> See generally, Kivlehan and Rosen, *supra*, note 5 at 73-75, 80-81.

about 1900 until the Japanese occupation during WWII suggest that France (upon which Vietnam bases her claims) did not accept that interpretation.

In 1947-48, China published maps containing “dotted lines” that seem to assert China's claim to the entire South China Sea, including the Spratly and Paracel islands, based on historic right<sup>14</sup>. Furthermore, the PRC (which was not invited to participate in the San Francisco Peace Conference) noted in an August 1951 letter to the 1951 San Francisco Peace Conference that the Paracel “Archipelago” and Spratly Islands, as well as the whole “Spratly Archipelago,” have always been Chinese Territory. They rejected that the American-British peace treaty with Japan could adjudicate title to these properties since the PRC was the lawful owner.

In 1958, the PRC issued a declaration that extended its territorial sea to 12nm. and claimed the territory of the Spratly (Nansha) Islands, Taiwan, the Paracels, Macclesfield Bank, and the Pescadores. During the Vietnam War, the North Vietnamese government appeared to have acquiesced to the PRC's claims to the SCS territories. After the Vietnam War, there was a falling-out between Beijing and Hanoi. Vietnam, in turn, reasserted its claims based on a succession of interests from France.

There have been skirmishes between Vietnam and China over these conflicting claims. In 1988, the Chinese and Vietnamese navies clashed at Johnson Reef in the Spratlys. Several Vietnamese boats were sunk and up to 80 sailors died. China took possession of several reefs and established a garrison at Fiery Cross Reef. China has not been consistent in articulating the legal basis of its claim, although its official fact sheets assert: “China was the first to discover and name the islands...and the first to exercise sovereign jurisdiction over them.” Such a statement clearly suggests that China's claim is based on the international law principles of “first discovery” coupled with “effective occupation.”

With the exception of Taiwan's claims to Itu Aba, the South China Sea claims of the PRC and Vietnam seem to be the strongest. China seems to have the best documented case of discovery and occupation prior to 1900. However, international law is generally loath to reward those in forcible possession of territory. But, in this case it is likely that a court (or dispute settlement body) deciding a case between Vietnam and China is likely to steer an “equitable” course and, as between China and Vietnam,

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<sup>14</sup> See, <http://www.southchinasea.org/docs/Li%20and%20Li-The%20Dotted%20Line%20on%20the%20Map.pdf>

award territories to those who occupy them. Were a court or dispute panel to reach such a result, it would necessarily mean that China's "dotted line" "historic waters" claim to the entire South China Sea as well as the claims of the third parties would be dismissed or heavily discounted.

Consolidation of the various SCS territorial claims, and an associated claim of archipelagic status, would result in a significant loss of sea space. (See TAB A) Under that system, the four circular arcs drawn around the outermost rocks/islands would roughly correspond to what would happen if a country were able to consolidate its claims in the group, declare that the islands and rocks merit archipelagic status, and then establish a system of baselines around the rocks/islands. The result, of course, is a much constrained sea space. Misuse of the archipelagic baseline system is not unprecedented considering the nature of the current excessive PRC claims on the Paracels. Inside of the enclosed areas, navigation and overflight is confined to historic or declared sea lanes. Under the LOS Convention, high seas freedoms would apply in the areas seaward of the archipelagic baselines, i.e., freedoms of navigation (surface and subsurface) and overflight would exist. But, as witnessed by recent activities by the PRC and other states that place restrictions on navigational and other high seas freedoms in the adjacent EEZ, there are a number of potential scenarios that could take shape in the SCS involving the excessive archipelagic claims, including:

- The PRC follows the “lead” of Brazil, India, and Malaysia and asserts the right to restrict military activities in their EEZ’s adjacent to their territorial claims to SCS islands;
- The PRC fails to allow freedoms of passage through the enclosed archipelagic area (contrary to Articles 52 and 53 of the LOS Convention);
- The PRC declares a “danger area” around the island similar to the Maritime Exclusion Zones which were established during the “War of the Tankers” in the Persian Gulf. PRC has twice declared danger zones in the areas of Hainan Island and the Paracels in 1979 and 1982. These danger areas, if not challenged, can ripen into full fledged maritime claims. These danger areas, if not rolled back, have the practical effect of excluding maritime commerce because maritime insurers do not want the added risk of damage to ships or cargoes that chose to operate in a contested area.



Even though the SCS disputes are normally characterized as territorial disputes, there are many potential impacts on the maritime community. The PRC has said many times that it is ready to base a Spratly's settlement "on existing principles of international law including the LOS Convention." Aside from the fact that the LOS Convention does not provide solutions to territorial disputes, it is important to ensure that the territorial disputes, and their associated excessive maritime claims in the SCS, do not seriously impact the maritime community's right to freedoms of navigation and overflight in that region.

### **PRC Maritime Coastal Claims**

On May 15, 1996, China ratified the 1982 LOS Convention. In doing so, it issued a declaration which promulgated straight baselines along the Chinese coast from the Shandong Peninsula and the Gulf of Tonkin. It drew baselines "enclosing" Hong Kong as well as the Paracel Islands in the South China Sea. Chartlett attached at TAB B. China's also reaffirmed its longstanding position restricting the right of warships to engage in innocent passage in Chinese territorial seas and its assertion of a 24NM security zone<sup>15</sup> – not authorized under the 1982 Law of the Sea Convention.

On December 23, 1999 the National Peoples Congress adopted an environmental protection law which *inter alia* requires advance written approval of "dangerous waste transport" through PRC "territorial seas and other sea areas." (sic) The "other sea areas" implies that the restrictions on transits would apply in the EEZ. Obviously, the US is concerned about this provision because innocent passage<sup>16</sup> may not be conditioned on prior notification or permission. Given the fact that some nations put nuclear-powered vessels in the same category as ships carrying hazardous cargo, this new law is problematic – especially for the U.S. Navy which has a large fleet of nuclear powered vessels.

Also, in the aftermath of the two incidents involving U.S. Navy survey vessels, China passed the "China Surveying and Mapping Law" which

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<sup>15</sup> Under Art 33 of the LOS Convention, the Contiguous Zone is not a "security" zone. Rather, it gives the coastal state increased law enforcement powers vis-à-vis foreign shipping with respect to the enforcement of the coastal nation's customs, immigration, fiscal or sanitary laws.

<sup>16</sup> Arts 22 and 23 permit a coastal state to establish documentary requirements and sea lanes in their territorial seas for the innocent passage transits of nuclear powered ships and ships carrying "inherently danger or noxious substances." The new Chinese law is distinguishable because a flat prohibition is far different from establishment of sea lanes in that transit rights are not suspendable. Also, there is no right to restrict such transits outside of the territorial seas.

went into effect on 1 December 2002. This law requires foreigners to get approval for surveying and mapping activities in Chinese territory and in other sea areas under Chinese jurisdiction. The United States regards this claim as excessive. While the LOS Convention is clear that coastal states have the authority under Article 56 of the LOS Convention to restrict “Marine Scientific Research,” in their EEZs, the U.S. regards military surveys and other military activities to be high seas freedoms (as opposed to research) and protected under Article 58(1) of the LOS Convention.<sup>17</sup>

### **New Taiwan Straight Baselines**

In addition to the PRC, Taiwan has asserted maritime claims which are not totally in accord with the 1982 LOS Convention. The texts of Taiwan’s most recent maritime claims are set forth in three laws<sup>18</sup> and a Notice to Mariners.

According to the U.S. Department of State, “the Law on the Territorial Sea and the Contiguous Zone is consistent with customary international law as reflected in the LOS Convention<sup>19</sup>. . . however, the provisions on baselines and innocent passage deviate significantly from those rules”. There are numerous deviations from the regime set forth in Articles 17-21 of the LOS Convention; however, most noteworthy is the requirement that “Foreign military or government vessels shall give prior notice to the authorities concerned before their passage through the territorial sea of the Republic of China.” The longstanding view of the United States and other industrialized nations is that while there are certain activities which are considered to be inconsistent with the regime of innocent passage, prior notice of passage was categorically rejected during the negotiation of the 1982 LOS Convention.

There are other areas of concern, including Taiwan’s claims to the Spratley and Paracel Islands, Macclesfield Bank and the Pratas (Tunsha) Islands, which are predicated on the Japanese Peace Treaty of 1952 and

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<sup>17</sup> The U.S. has long regarded the EEZ regime to be one associated with resource protection. Therefore, unless a nexus can be found between a particular activity in a foreign EEZ and a maritime state’s exercise of high seas freedoms, then the provision in Article 58 controls: “in the exclusive economic zone, all States....whether coastal or land locked...enjoy the freedoms in article 87.....” Article 87 deals with the enumeration of high seas freedoms.

<sup>18</sup> The Law on the Territorial Sea and Contiguous Zone of the Republic of China of 1998; the Law on the Exclusive Economic Zone and the Continental Shelf of the Republic of China of 1998; the Marine Pollution Control Act of 2000; and the Republic of China’s Territorial Sea Baseline, Outer Limits of the Territorial Sea and Contiguous Zone

<sup>19</sup> The Taiwanese legislation on the Exclusive Economic Zone and the Continental Shelf were also found to be generally consistent with customary international law as reflected in the LOS Convention.

occupation of Itu Aba by Taiwanese forces<sup>20</sup> as well as its recent effort in its use of straight baselines to include the Pescardores and other islands which fringe the Taiwan Mainland. Those straight baseline claims are inconsistent with the LOS Convention (Art 7) as it pertains to the use of straight baselines to enclose fringing islands, i.e., the use of straight baselines can be used to enclose islands which are immediately adjacent to the mainland of a country and “must not depart to any appreciable extent from the general direction of the coast....” The US position is that each baseline segment should not exceed 24NM in length. As depicted in TAB C, five baseline segments exceed 24NM in length. Indeed, the baseline which encompasses the Pescadores (T9-78) is almost 110NM in length.

## **5. Claims Analysis and Diplomatic Responses.**

### **Technical Analysis**

For many years, China maintained highly ambiguous coastal and open-ocean claims – especially in the South China Sea (SCS). The 1996 and subsequent maritime claims were welcome in one sense because they were ostensibly drafted in conformity with the 1982 LOS Convention. Indeed, most PRC legislation facially appears to be totally in conformance with the LOS Convention. Unfortunately, most of the new baselines do not meet the technical tests in the LOS Convention i.e., straight baselines may only be used to “smooth-out” a deeply indented coastline or to encompass fringing islands which are directly associated with the continental land mass.<sup>21</sup> As depicted in TAB 1, the PRC’s system of straight baselines encompass a considerable amount of sea space as they “gather” islands which are proximate to the coast. These actions, as indicated, were coupled by China’s passage on June 26, 1988 of its “Exclusive Economic Zone and Continental Shelf Act.” Together, this legislation fails to recognize the airspace above its EEZ as international airspace<sup>22</sup>. This assertion of coastal state authority is inconsistent with the plain meaning of Articles 58 and 87 of the LOS Convention that the international community would enjoy high seas freedoms, including freedom of navigation in the foreign EEZs.

The US Department of State has formally analyzed the Chinese claims, found virtually all of the claimed baselines to be excessive, and have

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<sup>20</sup> See, Kivlehan and Rosen, *supra* note 6 at pages 76-78.

<sup>21</sup> A U.S. demarche takes China to task because over 50% of the baseline segments are greater than 24NM in length (the maximum length of a baseline which can be used to establish a juridical bay) and the baseline segments are connected to low-tide elevations/rocks versus islands. Also, some of the longest segments do not follow the general direction of the coastline.

<sup>22</sup> DOD, Maritime Claims Reference Manual.

<http://www.dtic.mil/whs/directives/corres/html/20051m.htm>

protested them. So far as can be discerned, China has not rolled back its baseline claims in response to the U.S. Department's finding or lifted its other restrictions on navigational freedoms. Some regional states have signaled concern about the excessive PRC baselines. Indonesia, Korea, Vietnam and Japan have reportedly sent protest notes. Korea, in particular, stands to lose a significant portion of its EEZ in the Yellow Sea if the baselines are recognized. In maritime policy circles there seems to be firm agreement that the PRC claims are excessive, but focused diplomatic or other actions against those claims has not been prevalent - - with the exception of Japanese operational assertions vis-à-vis the conflicting EEZ claims associated with the Diaoyu/Senkaku dispute.

The excessive coastal claims by the PRC are certainly exacerbated by their territorial and associated ocean claims in the SCS and the East China Sea. Most states in SE Asia assert excessive straight baseline or related claims which have the effect of extending their territorial seas/EEZs far into the SCS (TAB C). The PRC claims almost all islets and rocks in the SCS based on its 1992 Law on the "Territorial Sea and the Contiguous Zone."<sup>23</sup> Viet Nam has excessive straight baselines and the Philippines has drawn excessive baselines around their archipelago. Taiwan, as indicated above, has just enacted a new system of excessive straight baselines which encompass disputed Islands and which now encompass normal traffic areas through the Taiwan Straits.

The new Taiwanese and PRC claims are unwelcome in the sense that it was hoped that the entry into force of the LOS Convention would dampen the pressure on states to assert and enforce excessive maritime claims. The new Taiwan straight baseline claims, when viewed alongside the excessive PRC baseline claims, are of concern because of the possibility that enforcement of the baseline claims will result in the *de facto* channelization of shipping (and overflight) into a narrow high seas corridor. If these claims are not openly challenged (and traffic stays in the resulting high seas channel), there are other states which would probably seek to imitate that practice. If the maritime claims are viewed collectively along with the territorial claims in the SCS, there is cause for some concern since most of the SCS could be encompassed inside a country's territorial sea or EEZ. If the pressure on states to make additional claims continues, then existing shipping routes through the SCS could be impacted.

### **Freedom of Navigation and Other U.S. Navy Operations.**

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<sup>23</sup> The baseline claims were made in conjunction with China's accession to the LOS Convention in 1996; although, those baselines are merged into the '92 territorial sea law.

In addition to an extensive record of diplomatic and softer protests of the excessive PRC maritime claims, the United States has mounted Freedom of Navigation (FON) operations designed to challenge restrictions on military operations and overflight in the EEZ and restrictions on military surveys.<sup>24</sup> On 12 June 1996, USS Crommelin (FFG-37) conducted a FON assertion against parts of the excessive straight baseline claim in an outbound transit from Hong Kong. In 1997, the USS Constellation (CV 64) transited inside of 12 NM of claimed straight baselines in the vicinity of Dagan Shan Island (Southern part of Taiwan Strait). In both cases, no reactions were noted by coastal authorities. There have also been some additional FON assertions designed to challenge the improper 24NM security zone and excessive straight baselines.

Even though this incident was not a pre-planned FON operation, the disputes over PRC maritime claims - and the associated rights of maritime users in foreign EEZs - came to a head in April of 2001 when a US Navy EP-3 was intercepted by an aggressive Chinese fighter pilot. The engagement resulted in a mid-air collision, resulting in the loss of the Chinese fighter jet and pilot and requiring the U.S. Navy EP3 to make an emergency distress landing on China's Hainan Island. After the incident, the Chinese government appeared divided on the legality of PRC's claims to restrict military activities in its EEZ. This led, according to one commentator, to a situation in which the Chinese "military did not fully disclose what it knew about the incident to Chinese officials outside of the military. Military officials on Hainan Island "did not provide full or accurate details of the incident to Beijing--especially not to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs--frustrating efforts by U.S. and Chinese diplomats to resolve the crisis<sup>25</sup>."

Further disputes have occurred in the Yellow Sea involving authorized activities in foreign EEZs. In September 2002 Chinese coastal patrol planes buzzed an unarmed U.S. Navy military survey vessel, USNS Bowditch, several times and demand that it cease its illegal survey activities in the Chinese EEZ. Bowditch's hydrophones were also damaged by Chinese fishing vessels that moved close aboard to disrupt the military survey activities. Later that same year, Chinese authorities also challenged the USNS Sumner, a military survey vessel. In both cases, the PRC contended that these vessels were engaged in unauthorized marine scientific research in their EEZ. The US takes the view that military surveys are distinguishable from marine scientific research and are a protected high seas freedom.

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<sup>24</sup> See, Military Claims Reference Manual.

<http://www.dtic.mil/whs/directives/corres/html/20051m.htm>

<sup>25</sup> Kraska, J. *supra* note 10 at 543 (2007)

The U.S. Navy has been a consistent proponent of FON assertions because regular operations in derogation of excessive claims are, in the long run, the best method of dampening tensions and/or nationalistic sensitivities associated with maintaining excessive claims. As a rhetorical matter, excessive maritime claims tend to be viewed unemotionally in the same way as the United States now views trade disputes<sup>26</sup> or taxation avoidance schemes. Routine US Navy operations in the Strait of Hormuz in derogation of Iranian claims are a case in point in which these claims are disputed in a low-key and businesslike manner. Those operations continue without any military reaction and only result in a perfunctory annual demarche to COMFIFTHFLT.

## **6. Commentary.**

U.S. policy with respect to the current excessive claims and outstanding territorial disputes is to promote public order on the high seas, predicated on the norms set forth in the 1982 LOS Convention. To the extent that the LOS Convention does not provide all of the answers, as is the case with respect to territorial disputes, the US would seek to have disputes settled peacefully and ensure that the disputes do not have a “spillover” effect which adversely affects the rights of maritime users.

U.S. policy has been rather low key with respect to Chinese maritime claims and neutrality with respect to the territorial issues in the SCS. Given the new claims in the Taiwan Straits and the lack of progress in SCS or the Diaoyu/Senkaku territorial adjudication in the East China Sea, it isn’t clear that the United States can afford to continue to keep this issue on the back burner much longer because of the high potential for either violence between the PRC and U.S. allies or the potential that one of the parties will be more aggressive in asserting claims that would negatively impact freedom of navigation and overflight by the United States or other maritime states.

The modalities of achieving rollback in claims will not come overnight because the PRC and other states will have to be persuaded that it is in their interests, and those of other regional states, to strictly conform their claims to the LOS Convention and to join dispute settlement mechanisms to adjudicate the territorial disputes.

The path forward for the United States and others who are adversely affected by the current disputes, but are not directly involved in the territorial claims, are in the best position to urge constructive actions to

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<sup>26</sup> The United States has litigated over 25 cases with the WTO dispute settlement panels with little fanfare plus has had a good record of tactical success.

finally adjudicate the territorial claims and for there to be a rollback of the excessive maritime claims such as the restrictions on military activities in EEZs and the illegal restrictions in China's contiguous zone. Political solutions are always the preferred outcome but addressing these issues in either a dispute settlement process or indirectly addressing the externalities of illegal claims in maritime CBMs or cooperative law enforcement activities are outcomes which the United States, and other states, should more actively consider.

### **Dispute Settlement Options: Territorial Claims and Maritime Boundaries.**

All states maintaining claims in Asian waters have an obligation under Art 2(3) of the U.N. Charter to settle their disputes by peaceful means. Similarly, Art 279 of the LOS Convention similarly requires that all parties to the Convention to resolve disputes peacefully.

International disputes which cannot be solved through negotiation are settled in three basic ways: (a) litigation; (b) arbitration; or (c) conciliation. Even though arbitration and conciliation suggest informality, those processes tend to be quite formal and legalistic. There are three standing dispute settlement bodies which could in theory take jurisdiction over some or all SCS or other territorial disputes: (a) the International Court of Arbitration (ICA); (b) the International Court of Justice (ICJ); and (c) Law of the Sea (LOS) dispute settlement fora.

Territorial disputes have been decided in the past by the ICJ and the ICA, but those cases can not be effectively brought before those bodies without the consent of the litigants. One major advantage to the use of third party bodies is that helps to "de risk" dispute settlement for its participants' political leaders since: (a) the tendency among UN based dispute settlement organizations to apply broad equitable principles so that everyone gets something and so that international actors will continue to use their services and (b) political officials don't have to absorb as much political blame as in a negotiated settlement because these cases can take years to be decided and the political leaders can blame the third parties judges/arbitrators for an unpopular decision.

Practically speaking, the breadth of the SCS and other territorial disputes are so complex that it is unlikely that the ICA/ICJ or a LOS forum could exercise jurisdiction over a case to determine sovereignty of all contested territories from among all of the claimants. Because of the stakes involved, adjudication of the disputes by the ICJ is the most efficacious approach since that is the most senior international court in existence and its judgments carry the greatest weight. But, obtaining a judgment of the ICJ would require the cooperation of all states.

A much more likely scenario would be that the ICJ/ICA, or an LOS forum (probably the LOS Tribunal), hear from all claimants and establish some baseline principles which would be applied in a negotiated settlement. The ICJ has done this in the past by issuing “advisory opinions.” That procedure could be followed in determining whether a SCS territory was a “rock,” and entitled to a 12NM territorial sea, versus an “island” which is entitled to a 200NM EEZ and continental shelf. The same could hold true to the dispute between Japan and China over Diaoyu/Senkaku.

Because of the widespread and pervasive impacts of these territorial disputes on peace and stability in the region, it would not be out of the realm of possibility for the UN General Assembly to convene an international conference to negotiate a settlement. While Article 24 of the UN Charter gives primary (not exclusive) responsibility to the UN Security Council for the maintenance of peace<sup>27</sup>, the UN General Assembly also has powers under Article 22 of the Charter to “establish subsidiary organs” as it deems necessary for the performance of its functions. UN General Assembly Resolutions generally require a simple majority and are not subject to a veto by China or any other of the Permanent Representatives to the UN Security Council. There is ample historic precedent for the UN General Assembly to act in the areas of peacekeeping and they have enacted “recommendations” which later had the force and effect of law. Since these maritime disputes affect many different states, affect the international oceans community as a whole, and involve significant economic and resource protection questions, a good faith argument can be made that the General Assembly could assert jurisdiction and convene an international conference to deal, on a political level, with all pending territorial and delimitation debates. As between the General Assembly and the UN Security Council’s jurisdiction, such an action would not be unwarranted because the totality of the questions are beyond the scope of the Security Council’s authority to deal with security questions. From a macro perspective a comprehensive convention negotiated under UN General Assembly auspices is also a more attractive approach than *ad hoc* cases brought before tribunals or arbitrators since the orchestrators of the effort will have much more freedom than judges or arbitrators to find pragmatic political solutions to all of the competing claims that allow all of the competing claimants to walk away with something for their countries.

### **Regional Cooperation Mechanisms**

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<sup>27</sup> See, 13 Whiteman, Digest of International law 534-35 (1968).



Building the political consensus to force the claimants into a dispute settlement mechanism or orchestrating action by the UN General Assembly will be extremely difficult to achieve in the short term given the fact that the parties have so much to lose from an adverse decision. Absent significant external political or economic pressure which forces China into an adjudicatory scheme, China has very little to gain by ceding its territorial (and adjacent ocean) claims, given its increasing requirements for hydrocarbons. Accordingly, U.S. policy should be to pursue these issues – especially those dealing with military activities in EEZs – on a bilateral basis in diplomatic talks and in the context of the Military Maritime Consultation Agreement (MMCA)<sup>28</sup>. However, it would be a missed opportunity for the U.S. to not seek to use existing multilateral fora to address these conflicting territorial and excessive maritime claims since it is important that there be multiple venues in which military and civilian officials from the PRC and other claimant states (Japan, Taiwan, Philippines, Korea and Viet Nam) can talk about security matters and come to a mutual recognition that excessive maritime claims – especially those which are enforced through actual or threatened use of force – are destabilizing and harmful to the region’s economic development. It is also important that officials from all of the regional states come to the mutual recognition that rapid adjudication of the territorial and conflicting maritime claims now stands in the way of rational development of the hydrocarbon resources in those areas. None of the claimant states are blessed with these land-based resources and until wind, solar, tidal, geothermal and nuclear energy generation options are fully developed, the region’s economies need access to those hydrocarbon resources. The United States can play a constructive role in trying to facilitate that dialogue and promote solutions which are predicated on the rule of law.

### **The Proliferation Security Initiative and Cooperative Law Enforcement**

The Proliferation Security Initiative (PSI) is currently the most prominent multilateral approach to increased enforcement of the laws of the sea by

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<sup>28</sup> The 1998 MMCA is loosely modeled on the US-Soviet 1972 Incidents at Sea Agreement (INCSEA). The MMCA has its origins in the 1994 “Yellow Sea Incident” in which the USS Kitty Hawk (CV-63) encountered a PLAN submarine and began to track the submarine using sono-buoys which were interpreted by the Han as aggressive maneuvering. The MMCA has been used as a forum for both sides to discuss their perspective on a variety of topics, including military activities under the 1982 LOS Convention, but the MMCA does not have the more detailed rules that are found in either INCSEA or the subsequent Dangerous Military Activities Agreement which contained specific rules on the types of military activities which are considered provocative. See generally, Wen-Chung Chai “Taiwan Report on Implications of Sino-US Military Maritime Agreement. 1 Sept 2004.

like-minded navies and coast guards<sup>29</sup>. PSI is intended to fill the enforcement gaps until replaced by international regimes such as the SUA<sup>30</sup>. The PSI is part of an overall counter-proliferation effort intended to apply intelligence, diplomatic, law enforcement, and other tools to prevent transfers of WMD-related items to countries and entities of concern. U.N. Security Council Resolution 1540 (2004)<sup>31</sup>, adopted unanimously by the UN Security Council, called on all states to take cooperative action to prevent trafficking in WMD. The PSI is one such form of cooperative action.

PSI mimics the tactics unofficially used by police departments throughout the United States to use very minor traffic infractions, i.e., a “broken tail light,” as a legal pretext to stop a suspicious vehicle in transit so that the occupant can be questioned and to permit a limited-scope inspection for weapons. PSI has also been a springboard used by some “declared participants” to enter into agreements with large Flag of Convenience (FOC) flag states to obtain greater law enforcement entitlements vis-à-vis their flag vessels. While there are some aspects of PSI which are still murky, the central theme is that maritime security officials (e.g., navies, coast guards, and port captains) of all member states will share intelligence on questionable vessels, then make a conscious effort to find “broken tail lights” on the most suspicious vessels, and then use whatever legal avenues are available to board and

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<sup>29</sup> The So San incident was probably the zenith of PSI coalition activity to combat trade in WMD-related materials. In December 2002 Spanish and US forces operating in the Arabian Sea, seized the North Korean vessel found to be carrying 15 hidden ballistic missiles, fuel and spare parts for delivery to Yemen. The ship was subsequently released.

<sup>30</sup> To address the limitations on the right of non-flag state authorities to interdict ships suspected of criminal or terrorist activity, major states sought to close some of major enforcement gaps at the IMO by pushing for an expansion of the 1988 Convention for the Suppression of Unlawful Acts against the Safety of Maritime Navigation (SUA). That Convention was adopted by the IMO following the Achille Lauro incident and follows—in a very general sense—the same model as for the prosecution of war criminals: states in possession of a war criminal must either prosecute or extradite. Following 9/11, the IMO’s Legal Committee began deliberating on changes to SUA which were then adopted into a new Protocol in 2005. Three notable changes are contained in the Protocol: (a) A new offense was created under SUA to criminalize the unlawful international transport of WMD aboard a ship; (b) A new provision authorizes any state encountering a ship suspected of carrying WMD to involuntarily board and search the vessel if the flag state gives permission or fails to respond to a boarding request within four hours; (c) A provision which strengthens the current international practice of allowing warships to involuntarily board ships suspected of WMD trafficking if the ship is without nationality or nationality is in doubt. SUA continues to look to the flag state to apprehend or prosecute those guilty of criminal acts at sea, or to extradite them.

<sup>31</sup> [http://www.un.org/Docs/sc/unsc\\_resolutions04.html](http://www.un.org/Docs/sc/unsc_resolutions04.html)

inspect the vessels for WMD and other types of dangerous cargoes that threaten peace and stability.

PSI has expanded to 20 declared participants who host training exercises and other activities. Its “Statement of Interdiction Principles<sup>32</sup>” has also been endorsed by more than 90 of the 191 UN member states. But PSI has its limits. First, PSI does not create substantive enforcement rights. Second, PSI has not been positively endorsed by the PRC, Indonesia, Brazil, or India. The PRC questions the legality of the measure. Third, arms exporting states like PRC are likely to block more expansive use of PSI because they are concerned it will interfere with their “lawful” arms-exporting activities.

There have also been substantial regional efforts to counter piracy—mostly in Southeast Asia<sup>33</sup>. International criticism led Southeast Asian littoral states (Indonesia, Malaysia, and Singapore) to step up Malacca Strait security through the establishment of coordinated air and naval patrols. As a result of these, and other initiatives (including a 17-nation patrol in 2004), the number of pirate attacks in the Strait of Malacca declined in 2005<sup>34</sup>. Yet, piracy and other transnational threats in the Strait and waters in West Africa remain major concerns. Due to sensitivities over sovereignty, Indonesia and Malaysia have firmly rejected the recent idea of external powers such as the U.S., Japan, or India permanently stationing military forces in the Strait. They have, however, welcomed help from external powers in the form of capacity building, intelligence exchanges, and training.

The PSI and the counter-piracy patrols are commendable efforts because increased warship “presence” in areas which are frequented by illicit vessel operators is likely to deter some from criminal behavior. Despite this constellation of efforts, there are still substantial enforcement gaps as it pertains to the smuggling of conventional weapons, illegal migrants, narcotics, and ideologically based piratical activity. PSI could be used by regional states to monitor shipping traffic for substandard shipping or

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<sup>32</sup> <http://www.state.gov/t/np/rls/fs/23764.htm>

<sup>33</sup> The U.S. Navy established an increased presence in waters off the coast of Somalia following some incidents in 2005 in which U.S. Navy and Coast Guard vessels came to the aid of merchant vessels coming under attack from pirates. Because these are largely unilateral efforts by the U.S. Navy, they are not dealt with herein. Malaysia recently announced that armed police will be placed aboard selected tug boats and barges traversing the Malacca states so that they can immediately respond

<sup>34</sup> On 11 November 2004, ASEAN in cooperation with the Plus Three countries (China, Japan and RoK) and Indian Ocean countries (India, Sri Lanka and Bangladesh) adopted the Regional Agreement on Combating Piracy and Armed Robbery against Ships in Asia. Under this agreement, an Information Sharing Centre will be set up in Singapore.

illegal pollution.<sup>35</sup> As regards piracy, even though the regional states in Southeast Asia are not anxious for direct outside participation by the U.S. or Japanese naval forces, it would still be beneficial for the U.S. to encourage regional states—say Indonesia, Malaysia, Singapore, and the Philippines—to establish MOUs wherein they agree to pursue pirates into each others' waters and consent to involuntary boarding.

In the current context of combating excessive maritime claims and lessening tensions, expanded regional membership in PSI could have some salutary effects since it would probably lead to the development of operational practices among the regional navies that would discourage operational maneuvers that are provocative. The measure could also lead to development of non-provocative measures of claims assertion (such as those in use by the U.S. Navy to assert US FON interests) that would allow states to be able to make their legal points without provoking a violent response by any other member states. Finally, a collaborative presence could also be there to prevent non-state actors from entering the disputed areas to establish new claims.

The PSI is probably the best model to emulate - - particularly because it is a collaborative entity that is heavily dominated by military officers and is more focused on combined maritime operations against illicit maritime activities than on political matters. But it is still understandable that states like the PRC are unlikely to sign on because they perceive the initiative as too heavily dominated by the United States. Given that, the United States should meet bilaterally with China to find a way to give them some sort of leadership position in the loose-knit organization so that they could participate. The United States should be open to establishing, with the PRC, an Asian version (perhaps under ASEAN auspices) of the PSI which operates under the same principles as the original entity.

### **Maritime CBMs and ASEAN**

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<sup>35</sup> The Malacca and Lombok/Makassar Straits in Southeast Asia are an especially heavily burdened area in which a comprehensive system does not yet exist to monitor and regulate traffic. Over 100,000 oil tankers and container and cargo vessels transit the Straits of Malacca and Singapore each year and carry over 3 millions barrels of crude oil through the Straits each day. In the nearby Indonesian Archipelago, the Lombok and Makassar Straits are heavily used mainly by very large crude carriers. The transport of radioactive wastes from Europe to Japan through the Asian Pacific region—in particular through the Strait of Malacca—is a related concern. Coastal states along the routes have expressed concern and others, such as Malaysia, have demanded that the vessels not enter Malaysia's territorial waters. Indonesia has declared that as it cannot close its international archipelagic sea lanes, but it has called on Japan not to use Indonesian waters to transport their radioactive wastes.

At various times, efforts have been undertaken on bilateral and multilateral bases to establish dialogue forums and non-binding agreements to limit provocative activities at sea so that the world's maritime security forces could operate freely on the world's oceans in accordance with the 1982 LOS Convention. The prototype of modern CBMs is the US-Soviet Agreement on the Prevention of Incidents at Sea (hereafter INCSEA), which was signed by the US and USSR on May 25, 1972<sup>36</sup>. This agreement was followed up by the 1989 Dangerous Military Activities Agreement (DMA)<sup>37</sup>. These two agreements collectively, have proven to be a very successful way of building confidence among “competing” armed forces and providing a mechanism for dialogue even when political times were tough. INCSEA and DMA have been emulated by many different states and in many different regions of the world<sup>38</sup>.

Participation by the US in multilateral CBMs – especially those which are focused on the maritime environment - has been tentative. There has been a general reluctance of the U.S. Department of Defense and, to a lesser extent the PRC, to engage in wide-ranging CBM discussions of the order witnessed in Europe that involved NATO and the Soviet Union. Today, there continue to be concerns that CBM discussions on military operations would result in pressure on DOD to compromise its positions on its operating freedoms under the LOS Convention. There is the related concern that even if DOD was successful in keeping substantive operational CBMs off the table, this would create animosity among CBM participants (especially in the ASEAN context) which, in turn, would either undercut various military-to-military engagement programs conducted by the US or undermine bilateral agreements such as the MMCA with the PRC. A more general concern remains that some operational CBMs could ripen into new ocean claims that are inconsistent with the 1982 UN LOS Convention i.e., slippery slope worries.

The foregoing concerns are valid but the United States should continue to work through organizations like the ASEAN Regional Forum to reinvigorate its past activities in the maritime CBM arena and to have regular dialogues on excessive maritime claims, codes of conduct by the region's militaries in disputed areas, and other information exchanges. Given the highly political nature of these topics, it is viewed that these meetings offer the greatest chance of success if the meetings were to be conducted on behalf of the ARF members by military, marine safety, and technical professionals. It may also make sense for these activities to be

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<sup>36</sup> <http://www.state.gov/t/ac/trt/4791.htm>

<sup>37</sup> [http://en.wikisource.org/wiki/Prevention\\_of\\_Dangerous\\_Military\\_Activities\\_Agreement](http://en.wikisource.org/wiki/Prevention_of_Dangerous_Military_Activities_Agreement)

<sup>38</sup> <http://www.sipri.org/contents/worldsec/nk/agreements.html>

informally linked to the International Maritime Organization (IMO),<sup>39</sup> a UN technical organization that works pretty well.

As indicated, the treaty-based and diplomatic structure of the European (OSCE) approach to CBMs is not advisable given the volatile nature of the conflicting claims in Asia. But a CBM agreement negotiated under the auspices of the ARF might pave the way to a formal resolution of the conflicting claims: In the short term, a CBM arrangement might:

- Facilitate the development of strong institutional contacts in the military, marine law enforcement, safety, and environmental communities;
- Establish a clearinghouse where states could publish or post information not reasonably available but which would otherwise affect safety at sea or promote transparency;
- Emerge as a forum for the discussion of a technical or “military to military” matters<sup>40</sup> on an informal, yet near real-time basis, depending on the severity of the problem; and
- Serve as a forum for the discussion and drafting of standard operating procedures, publications, and training materials.

The use of an organization like the ARF is probably the most viable approach that can help shape constructive maritime and oceans policy development and help to deter unilateral actions by the various claimants. The ARF is the only multilateral “game” in Asia and despite its flaws, regional interests are best served by United States being an active player in the ARF process and encouraging full participation by all maritime claimants.

## **7. Conclusion**

Thus far we have collectively a ‘dodged a bullet’ as it relates to the impacts of excessive claims by China, Taiwan, and other countries around the SCS and East China Sea. These claims, if expanded or militarily acted upon, have significant potential to become a security

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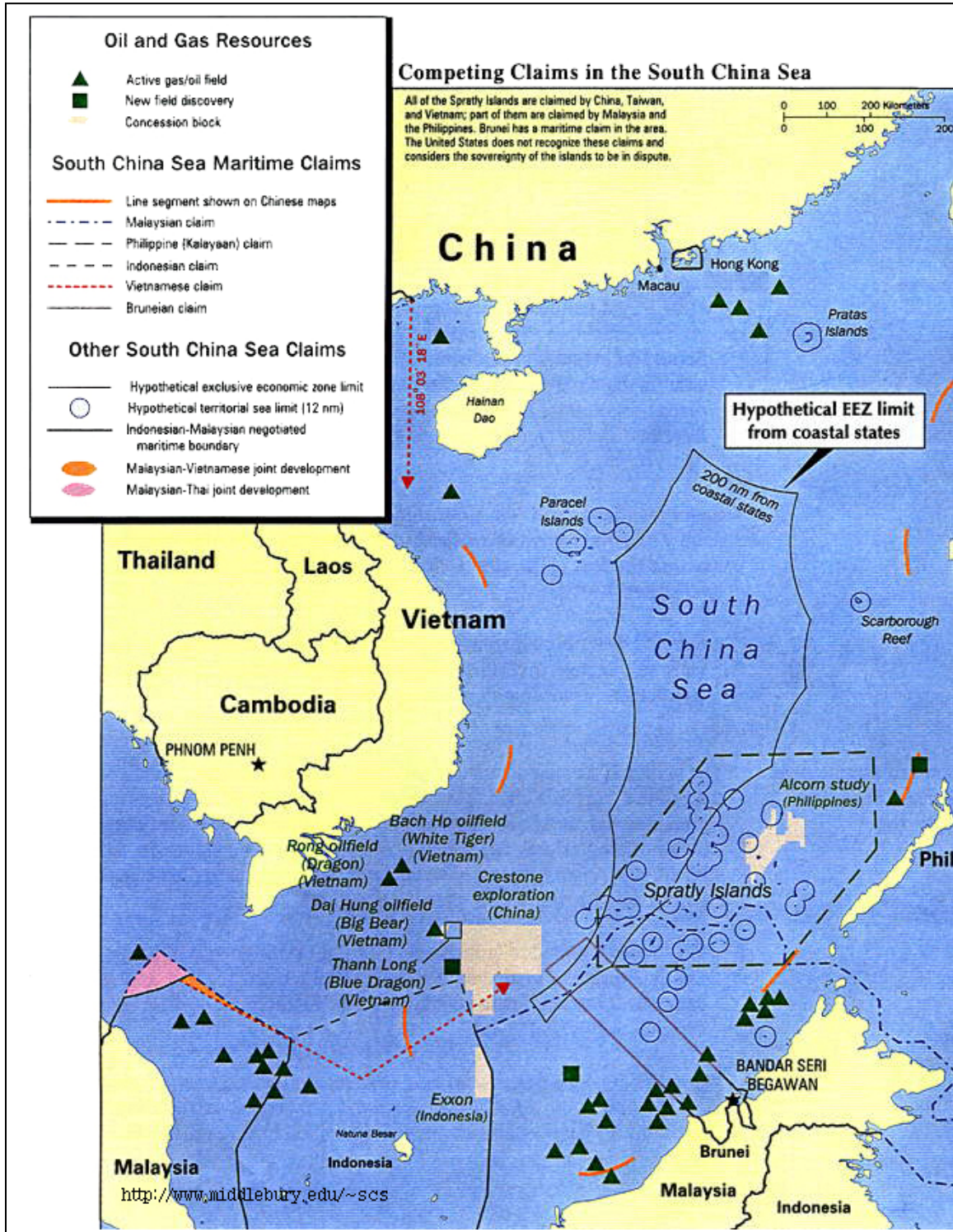
<sup>39</sup> Participants acknowledged a degree of overlap between the MSOM and matters under consideration by the IMO; however, most felt that the MSOM was an excellent forum to discuss pending IMO issues on a regional basis before they were adjudicated in London. The same comment also pertains to issues under discussion in Track II settings like CSCAP and the WPNS.

<sup>40</sup> The annual INCSEA meetings between the U.S. Navy and the Russian Navy are a possible model.

flashpoint that would spill over into the major sea lanes of the world. Up to now, the “dust ups” have been localized. However, there would be significant global impacts if there were military actions involving shipping in any of those disputed areas. In the so-called “War of Tankers” between Iran and Iraq in the mid-1980s, an outcome of this local conflict in the Persian Gulf was worldwide increases in the cost of refined petroleum products, significant increases in marine insurance rates, and concomitant increases in transportation costs. Accordingly, even though things are now quiet, all of the ingredients are present to erupt in conflict, which would destabilize the region and cause further damage to the troubled world economy.

Maritime CBMs and reinvigoration of the PSI – to include China – are seen as low risk steps that the United States, alone or in concert with others, can take to get all of the parties talking about these tough issues. When the time is right, the United States would also do well to try to broker some type of formal dispute settlement option. Like the current financial crisis, excessive maritime claims have the potential to significantly flare up and affect all international trade and commerce. It is better to work these problems today when relative calm prevail, than in the eye of a storm.

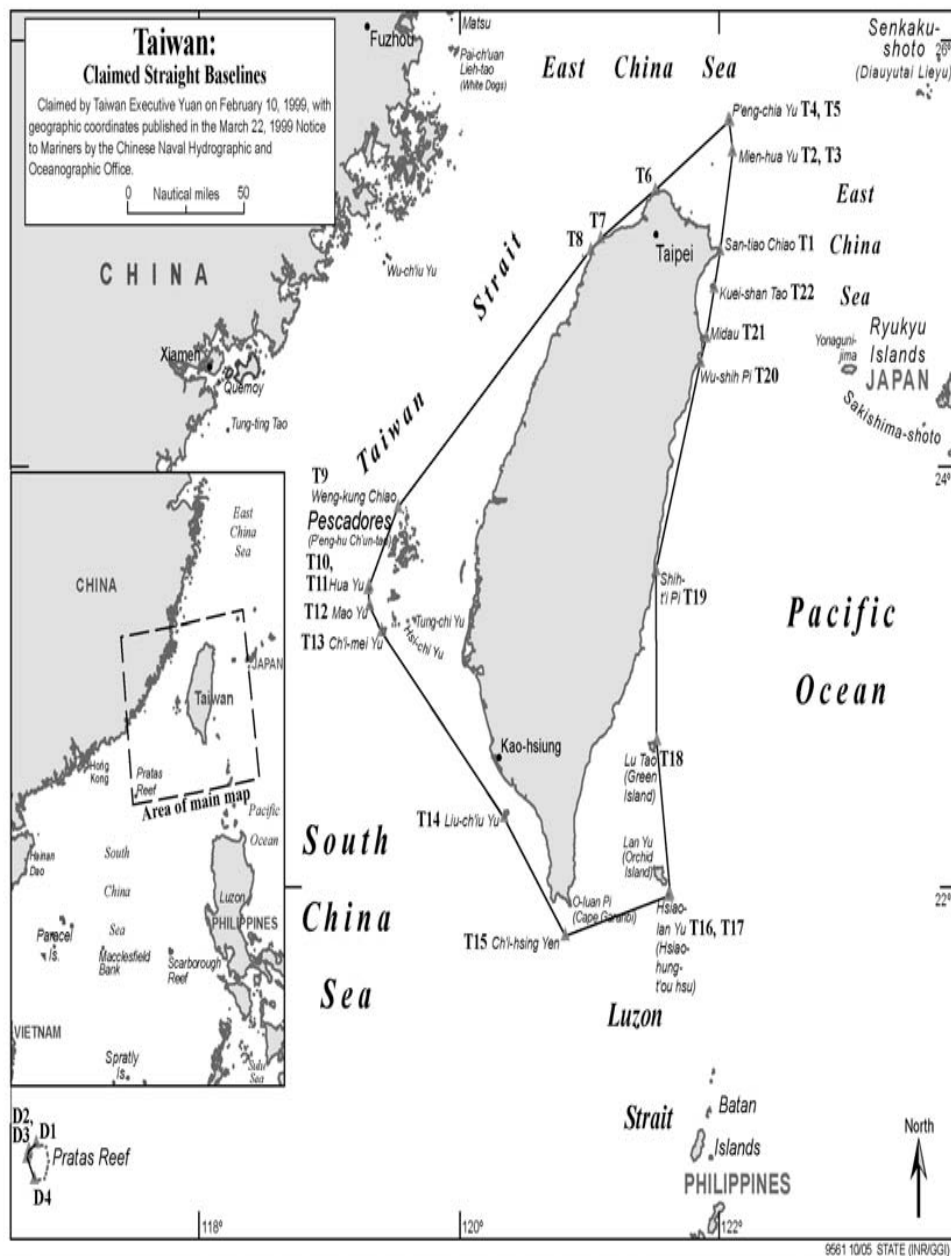




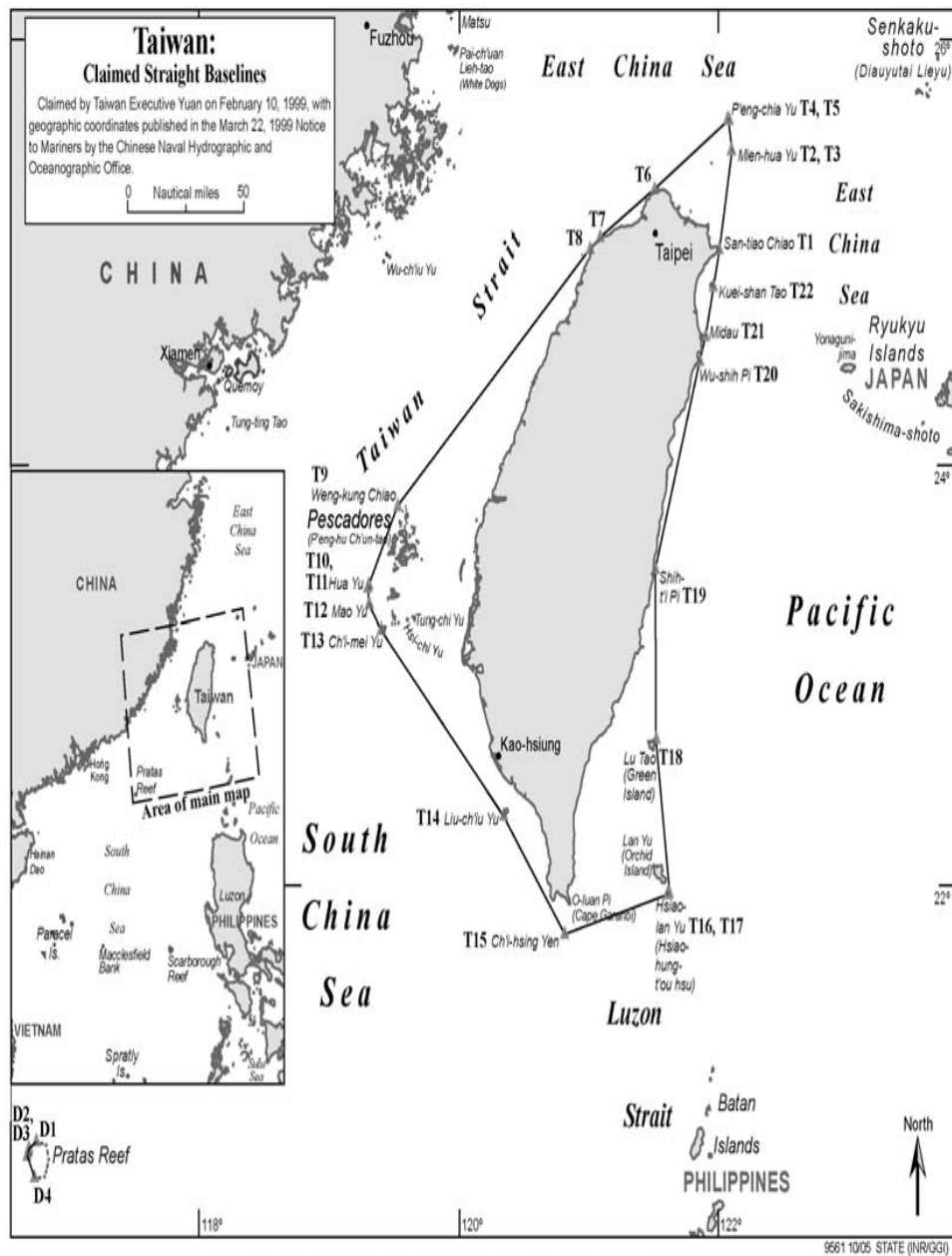
TAB A - Middlebury











TAB C TAIWAN STRAIGHT BASELINES; Source LIS, No.127 (2005)



**China's Territorial Ambitions?**  
**Unraveling Past, Uneasy Present, and Uncertain Future**

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## **INTRODUCTION**

Where does China's external behavior come from? Is China an expansionist or a status quo power? What would be the implications of a rising China for a host of salient security and foreign-policy issues in the region? What lessons can be gleaned from China's past military involvement for a future diplomatic crisis? What then can we expect about China's likely future attitude toward territorial or maritime disputes in the region, of which it is a part?

This essay attempts to shed some light on the above-mentioned set of questions by looking at China's past and current behavior in territorial and maritime disputes. The first section examines the physical, historical, and political backgrounds of China's territorial disputes. The next section looks into the principal trends and major developments involved in China's territorial entanglement with its neighbors. It then analyze in detail the main causes for determining China's paths to use military force or engage in a negotiated diplomatic solution. Finally, this essay sums up the patterns of China's past and current behavior and makes some tentative conclusions as to its future attitude toward territorial or maritime issues.

Due to the nature of the topic, a few caveats are in order. The first and foremost reminder is that as there exists a huge body of literature on the individual cases of China's territorial disputes, especially its military conflicts with India and with the Soviet Union, they will not be repeated here. Instead, this essay aims at taking stock of enduring patterns and new developments in the history of China's territorial and maritime disputes. Second, the naming and sequence of places or areas under dispute obviously does not indicate any preferences or hidden motives of this essay. They

shall be avoided as much as possible. Third, but not the last, is that this essay has harnessed new Chinese literature recently available to the author in addition to the extant publications written in Korean and English. This could unwittingly lead to the telling of China's side of the story; but this is not intentional. Those who are supersensitive to Chinese views or its version of a story are recommended not to read this manuscript.

## **PATTERNS OF CHINA'S TERRITORIAL AND MARITIME DISPUTES**

The historical and political backgrounds for China's territorial and maritime disputes are complex, confusing, and contradictory—to say the least. As the late China hand Michel Oksenberg once opined, no major powers for the past 160 years have experienced so dramatic internal and external changes as China's.<sup>1</sup> In terms of its physical configuration, China shares its 22,000-km land border with 14 countries and its maritime borders are adjacent with six others. Similarly, China is the self-claimed “unified multinational state,” including 55 ethnic minorities—with most of them residing in China's border areas.

In particular, China's encounters with the West in the 19<sup>th</sup> century has had an enormous and diverse impact on its national security objectives,<sup>2</sup> its external strategy, its domestic governance, and even the psyche of the general populace—to name but a few. In the early years of the PRC, it inherited a host of “unequal treaties” or un-

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<sup>1</sup> For an excellent historical review of China's domestic and external change of courses, see Michel Oksenberg, “China: A Tortuous Path onto the World Stage,” in Robert A. Pastor, ed., *A Century's Journey: How the Great Powers Shape the World* (New York: Basic Books, 1999), pp. 291-331.

<sup>2</sup> In the broadest sense of the term China's national security objectives are sovereignty, development, and stability. Territorial preservation is the core of the sovereignty issues, which is obviously linked to the other two.



demarcated border lines that are reflective of the mythical “century of humiliation.” For these reasons, therefore, border demarcation and the ensuing exercise of its sovereign rights over its territories have become among the most urgent tasks of the people’s republic.

Like many other countries, China has basically adopted both military means and diplomatic solutions in settling territorial disputes. Of particular relevance to this study is the fact that the PRC resorted to the use of force during the first half of its 60-year existence. According to Alastair Iain Johnston’s analysis on China’s militarized interstate dispute behavior, almost half of the cases are related to territorial disputes and 41 percent of them transpired within the first ten years of the founding of the PRC.<sup>3</sup> In other words, there were no inland territorial disputes to which China employed military force for the past 30 years, that is China’s reform period.<sup>4</sup>

The spatial as well as temporal comparison of China’s behavior strongly indicates that China is less inclined to resort to force to non-major powers. Included in this category are Myanmar (i.e., Burma), Nepal, Pakistan, North Korea in the early 1960s. Interestingly enough, China has also opted for negotiated solutions since the 1990s with countries that had had military conflicts such as India, Soviet Union/Russia, and Vietnam. Moreover, China’s active participation since the mid-1990s in such multilateral security mechanisms as Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO), ASEAN Regional Forum (ARF), and the Six-Party Talks

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<sup>3</sup> Alastair Iain Johnston, “China’s Militarize Interstate Dispute Behavior 1949-1992: A First Cut at the Data,” *China Quarterly*, No. 153 (1998), p. 24.

<sup>4</sup> China’s February 1979 “pedagogical war” against Vietnam is not exactly caused by “territorial disputes.” See Section Four for a detailed explanation on the major causes of the war.

constitute a new form of China's negotiated settlement of disputes including territorial disputes.

## **CONTENDING ISSUES IN CHINA'S DISPUTES**

China's initial positions on the territorial issues were based on two principles: non-recognition of "unequal treaties" and the maintenance of the status quo. This means, in practice, the burgeoning people's republic needed to negotiate virtually all of its neighbors ranging from its south and southwest to its north and northeast. The first armed conflict broke out with Myanmar in November 1955. It called for border negotiations and was concluded in 1960. In the early 1960s China was able to conclude border treaties or agreements with a series of countries such as Nepal (1961), North Korea (1962), Mongolia (1962), Pakistan (1963), and Afghanistan (1963). At the same time, however, China's border demarcations remained unresolved with the Soviet Union, India, Vietnam, Bhutan, and Laos. In this decade the barometer for negotiated settlement was whether China's counterparts accept the principles of the non-recognition of "unequal treaties" and the maintenance of the status quo.

Since the 1980s China's heavy-handed approach have begun to change so that it emphasized non-military solutions and confidence measures along its borders. Most notable were in the 1990s China's border settlement with Laos (1991), Russia's western border (1994), Kazakhstan (1994), Kyrgyzstan (1996), Tajikistan (1999), Vietnam (1999), and Russia's eastern border (2004). As a consequence, the number of China inland territorial disputes has significantly reduced, while its maritime disputes

(e.g., the South China Sea/the Spratlys, the Paracels, the Senkaku Islands/Diaoyudao<sup>5</sup>) remain unchanged.

Since the 1990s and continuing to date the above trend has continued for obvious reasons. First of all, in order to further develop its domestic economic development Chinese leaders need to have a continuous stable external environment that are conducive to stability and development at home. China's call for "setting aside disputes [now], but working for joint development" of marine resources and energy should be understood in this context. China's new diplomatic change of courses—based on its newly found power and influence—since the late 1990s are reflected in a panoply of slogans, including "China's peaceful rise" (*heping jueqi*), "China's peaceful development" (*heping fazhan*)<sup>6</sup> or "harmonious world" (*hexie shijie*). China's new approach to territorial disputes is in line with China's projection of an image as a "responsible great power."

Several observations can be made. For one thing, among the 23 cases of territorial disputes China has since 1949 been involved in 17 of them were resolved peacefully, and it took less than half of the disputed areas. This also includes eight cases that were peacefully resolved in the 1990s at a time that China's rise was evident. In contrast to the popular belief, the empirical data strongly suggest that China did not employ the show or actual use of force against its weaker neighbors.<sup>7</sup> In fact, the three countries (the Soviet

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<sup>5</sup> The islands under disputes are called the Senkaku Islands in Japanese, the Diaoyudao by mainland China, and Diouytai (or Tiaoyutai) by Taiwan.

<sup>6</sup> For a difference between "peaceful rise" and "peaceful development," see Sukhee Han, "The Rise of China and East Asia's Changing Order (in Korean)," *New Asia*, Vol. 11, No. 3 (Autumn 2004), pp. 113-34, particularly pp. 116-23.

<sup>7</sup> M. Taylor Fravel, "Regime Insecurity and International Cooperation: Explaining China's Compromises in Territorial Disputes," *International Security*, Vol. 30, No. 2 (2005), p. 46. According to the KIDA's World on War (WoW) database, most of China's territorial and maritime disputes were resolved or dormant (i.e., low-level conflict) by the end of 1990s.

Union, India, and Vietnam) China employed forceful means were a superpower, a regional major power, or a regional “hegemon” backed by the Soviet Union. It also raises the validity of the traditional wisdom that due to China’s 19<sup>th</sup> century experiences with the Western imperialists it is non-compromising on territorial issues.

For another, China’s active participation in and resolution of negotiated settlement were mostly concentrated in the early 1960s and in the first half of the 1990s. Notwithstanding the vast difference in China’s “comprehensive national power” between the two periods, the common denominator is its internal weakness: The first was largely caused by the dismal failure of the Great Leap Forward and the other by the aftermath of Tiananmen Incident. Both periods did not swerve China into a forceful external behavior, however—contrary to the familiar scapegoat or diversionary theories.

For still another and more specifically, China’s 1962 war with India contrasts its nonviolent behavior with other neighbors in the early 1960s. Put another way, why China’s diplomatic approach in the 1950s toward India changed to a violent means in 1962 and how China’s border disputes with the Soviet Union turned to a negotiated settlement since the 1990s? As John W. Garver has rightly noted, the historiography of China goes that reactionary leaders were willing to suppress people internally, but unwilling to stand up to the foreign countries. Thus, internal repression and external weaknesses go together.<sup>8</sup> But China’s past behavior does not support this traditional

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<sup>8</sup> John W. Garver, “The PLA as an Interest Group in Chinese Foreign Policy,” in C. Dennison Lane, Mark Weisenbloom, and Dimon Liu, eds., *Chinese Military Modernization* (London and Washington, DC: Kegan Paul International and The AEI Press, 1996), p. 274. See also his “China’s Push Through the South China Sea: The Interaction of Bureaucratic and National Interests,” *China Quarterly*, 1992.

belief. All in all, the causes of China's past behavior are so complex, thus calling for a more detailed analysis.

## **DETERMINANTS OF CHINA'S TERRITORIAL ATTITUDE**

The arguments for China's expansionist behavior are long and diverse. One is the present-day manifestation of its "Sinocentrism," as most of its neighbors fall into its traditional "sphere of influence." Another is its irredentist claims such as the South China Sea, Taiwan, and now-resolved Hong Kong and Macao. Still another is the nature of China's political system characterized by authoritarian rule, repressive human rights practices, and its rising power and influence in the region.

China's historical project—known as "Northeast Project" (*dongbei gongcheng*)—to incorporate the history of Koguryo into their own is the case in point and constitutes the gravest of all potential problems between China and South Korea—thus calling for a lengthy analysis.<sup>9</sup> While the Chinese government averred that the project was an academic endeavor, which began in 2002 by such provincial-level governments as Liaoning, Jilin, and Heilongjiang, it is anything but an academic one. In fact, the "Northeast Project" had begun much earlier—in 1996—by the regional academies of social sciences located in the three northeastern provinces mentioned above and was ratified by none other than Hu Jintao—the current Party General Secretary and then a member of the Politburo Standing Committee—as a

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<sup>9</sup> See a flurry of newspaper reports on the subject including B. J. Lee, "Historical Differences," *South China Morning Post*, August 13, 2004; Edward Cody, "China Gives No Ground in Spats over History," *Washington Post*, September 22, 2004, p. A25; Howard W. French, "China's Textbooks Twist and Omit History," *New York Times*, December 6, 2004; David Scofield, "China Ups and Downs in Ancient-Kingdom Feud with Korea," *Asia Times*, August 16, 2004; *idem.*, "China Puts Korean Spat on the Map," *Asia Times*, August 19, 2004.

national-level project. It is for these reasons that the project was then led by the Chinese Academy of Social Sciences (CASS), the government's policy-development organ, and that three-trillion Korean won and a manpower of about 1,500 were able to be devoted to it. In brief, it is a political—not an academic—project of the Chinese central government.

In light of the expected objections from both North and South Korea as well as from the world community, what prompted China to engineer the historical distortions? First, it stands to reason that the steady power shift in Northeast Asia—including China's rise, North Korea's nuclear crisis, readjustments in the U.S.-ROK alliance, and Japan's elevated status in U.S.'s East Asia strategy—must have a place in it. Second, North Korea's future and the two-million strong ethnic Koreans in the northeastern provinces must remain a serious concern for China's political leaders and strategists. Third, a unified Korea's possible claim over the Gando region—which extends to much of Manchuria—well into the future can be nipped in the bud should any ancient histories of China's current northeastern region be incorporated as part of China's own proud and rich history.

While the South Koreans have so far believed in China's position that an academic issue should be resolved in academic terms only, the dawning reality is that the "Northeast Project" is nothing but the Chinese government's official project, aided by the media, the academic and policy units, and regional governments. The project and the lessons thereof should awaken the Korean people to the dangers of the self-fulfilling prophecy about China. Additionally, the recent "China bashing" in South Korea—largely triggered by the issue of historical distortion—should be harnessed into a new opportunity not only to rethink China's strategic intentions

towards the Korean Peninsula but also to dispel the self-centered “China fantasy” many of us have held up to now.

One long-held view determining China’s attitude has been its geopolitical perceptions as well as its strategic consideration that go beyond bilateral issues. China’s use of force against India in 1962 is a case in point as China preferred diplomatic solutions with other Himalayan states in the early 1960s. From this perspective, China’s March 1969 border clash with the mighty Soviet Union was intended not to reclaim small areas, but to deter the future threats to its own security. In both cases China faced internal weaknesses, especially the Cultural Revolution in the latter case. In addition, the 1968 Soviet invasion of Czechoslovakia and the ensuing acquiescence of the West must have a sobering impact on the minds of Chinese leaders and strategists.<sup>10</sup>

Similarly, the Soviet factor lurked behind China’s territorial attitude in the 1970s. While China used force against Vietnam twice (the Paracels in 1974 and the pedagogical war in 1979), it actively sought for diplomatic solutions with Japan and the Philippines. As befits China’s normalizing efforts with the U.S. against the Soviet threat, it concluded with Japan diplomatic relations in 1972 as well as a peace treaty in 1978—notwithstanding its most salient issue of the Senkaku Islands/Diaoyudao. Likewise, China had shown conciliatory attitude toward the Philippines’ forceful occupation of several islets in the Spratlys in the hope that the ASEAN members

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<sup>10</sup> See Thomas J. Christensen, “Windows and War: Trend Analysis and Beijing’s Use of Force” and Allen Carlson, “More Than Just Saying No: China’s Evolving Approach to Sovereignty and Intervention Since Tiananmen,” in Alastair Iain Johnston and Robert S. Ross, eds., *New Directions in the Study of China’s Foreign Policy* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2006), pp. 50-85, 217-41, respectively.

would join the anti-Soviet/anti-Vietnam coalition. Such nonviolent attitude was not found in China's relations with Vietnam throughout the 1970s.

China's post-Tiananmen diplomatic isolation also affected its diplomatic offensive with its Central Asian countries—even if by the early 1990s the Soviet threat almost dissipated. While Chinese leaders had in mind Taiwan's own normalizing efforts with the newly-independent Central Asian countries, they also harbored the possibility of power vacuum in its western border areas. This also signifies the importance of geostrategic and security considerations in the minds of Chinese leaders and strategists.

In the cases of territorial disputes, it is often argued that internal or legitimacy problems were diverted to an external crisis—the so-called “diversionary theory.” In the Chinese case, on the other hand, it is more inclined to take conciliatory or even concessionary attitude when it is “preoccupied” with domestic affairs—the “preoccupation theory.”<sup>11</sup> Included in the category are China's border negotiations with Mongolia, Pakistan, Afghanistan, North Korea and others in the 1960s as well as its border agreements in the 1990s with the Soviet Union/Russia, the Central Asian states, Laos, and Vietnam. China's negotiations over the demarcation of borders—in which ethnic minorities reside—at a time when ethnic riots occurred in Tibet (1959), Xinjiang (1962 and the early 1990s) also illustrate this point.

For the past 30 years there were two most importance changes in China's domestic and external environment. One is reform and open-door policy adopted in December 1978, which has had a major impact on its attitude toward territorial disputes. The other is the disappearance of the Soviet threat to China's security. Their



combined effect has been the change of China's national interests and their priorities. Moreover, the ushering of the post-Cold War era has called for a renewed attention to a variety of nontraditional threats to China's security.<sup>12</sup>

As long as China's national interests are riveted to economic interests, it is imperative that China project the images of a "responsible great power," a "peace-loving country," and a "benign and benevolent state." China's controlled behavior over the Senkaku Islands/Diaoyudao as well as its "historical issues" with Japan are a case in point. As present-day major powers in East Asia, both China and Japan benefit from economic interactions and regional stability, but rising nationalism has long prevented them from achieving a truly amicable relationship. In particular, the maritime disputes over East China Sea and the Diaoyudao serve as the most contending issue in their bilateral ties. Thus the Chinese government is afraid of falling between the two stools: economic logic and political imperative—especially in the eyes of the Chinese people.<sup>13</sup>

Furthermore, China's search for energy and resources would likely put its national priorities over maritime issues for the foreseeable future. China's economic interests over Chunxiao gas field and Diaoyudao in the East China Sea as well as those small islets, atolls and reefs in the South China Sea should be seen against this context. For the moment, China's best interests lie in "setting aside the disputes [i.e., sovereignty issues], but working for joint development." In brief, it is basically a

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<sup>11</sup> See Johnston (1998) and Fravel (2005) cited above.

<sup>12</sup> For an exposition on China's new security threats, see Susan L. Craig, *Chinese Perceptions of Traditional and Nontraditional Security Threats* (Carlisle Barracks, PA: U.S. Army War College Strategic Studies Institute, 2007).

<sup>13</sup> China's nationalism is based on popular sentiments, not on the government's. See Che-po Chan and Brian Bridges, "China, Japan, and the Clash of Nationalisms," *Asian Perspective*, Vol. 30, No. 1 (2006), pp. 127-56.

status quo policy, but it also begs an answer what if China's becomes a predominant power.

## **SOME CONCLUDING OBSERVATIONS**

In the closing pages of this essay, it is appropriate to sum up the findings and arguments with respect to the questions raised at the outset. First, China's attitude toward territorial and border disputes is based on realpolitik considerations in a sense that it takes into consideration a wide array of factors, such as balance of power, geopolitical configuration, the Soviet threat, and the "unequal treaties." Second, China's negotiation behavior during the Cold War was influenced by, in descending order, national security, domestic stability, and economic interests, while its economic interests now occupy the central stage. Third, now that its inland territorial disputes are almost settled, China is paying more attention to maritime disputes in the East and South China Seas. Fourth, China's expansionist tendency has not been found for the last 30 years; in its stead it has acted as a status quo power—with the glaring exception of the Taiwan case.

We can deduce from the above discussion that China is not 19<sup>th</sup> century England or the expansionist Soviet Union. China's use of force has also been very selective and limited; it is not intended to expand its territories, but it unilaterally withdrew after achieving political objectives in a short-duration war.<sup>14</sup> It is also evident that China has gradually escalated its warnings from diplomatic solutions to military means. Finally, while China has long maintained the "people's war" strategy, it has actually adopted the "forward defense" strategy. Since 1949 China has never been invaded by a foreign enemy, but it actually fought war in other countries' territories.

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<sup>14</sup> Andrew Scobell, *China's Use of Military Force: Beyond the Great Wall and the Long March* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003).

In conclusion, for the past 30 years China has now shown an expansionist tendencies, but it is not self-evident that it will remain so in the years ahead. China's national interests have shifted from security to economic interests, especially those in maritime areas. That China's status quo policy over maritime issues will continue is not certain. As Michel Oksenberg noted at the outset, the past 30 years may turn out to be an exception in China's tortuous path to a great power as well.

# The Chinese Navy Modernization and Its Impact on the Republic of Korea Navy

Captain (ROKN) Sukjoon Yoon

## INTRODUCTION

The People's Republic of China(PRC) is rising in politically, economically and military, but its future is uncertain. Impact of China' rise will be multi-dimensional and sensible one as well. This is a challenge or opportunity to the Republic of Korea(ROK). Thinking strategically of China's rise is a key question in Korea's current effort to develop its national security in line with reconstruction of a stable post-post Cold War regional order.<sup>1</sup>

Maritime issues are centered in this challenge because geographic proximity and political and economic interaction between China and Korea. If a trend-analysis to looking forward interaction between two nations has to be examined, their maritime-driven relationship in the calculus of national security should be witnessing. Since 1980s increased maritime interests have been their new agenda. This reflected the primary goal of their regional and global view. More concretely, maritime security is main agenda of relationship between them.

The paper examines concurrent trending issue between China and Korea titled the People's Liberation Army(PLA) Navy modernization and its impact on the Republic of Korea(ROK) Navy. This paper examines what myth and vulnerability of the Chinese military modernization are, how performance of the Chinese navy's reform would be, and why kind of impacts affected on the Korean national security. These trend analyses would conclude that two nations have some feasible reasons to cooperate each other, rather than conflicts in terms of maritime matters. It is indeed overestimated that maritime issues between two nations call questions of which Chinese navy's rise will place on Korea' national security.

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<sup>1</sup> Many theorists of international politics argued that the principal of characteristic of post-post Cold War international systems was turning out to be the age of nonpolarity. See Richard N. Haass, "The Age of Nonpolarity," *Foreign Affairs*, May/June 2008, pp. 44-56.

This paper examines how the ROK Navy's strategy should both reach out for a durable maritime security partnership with Chinese navy and also worry about worse-case scenarios from feasible confrontation between two navies. In doing this, this paper analyzes in detail the scenario-based interactive and feasible maritime conflicts between two navies that depicted possible conflicts clashing between two navies at the confined sea around the Korean peninsula and in the disputable seas of the region. It can be portrayed that why Chinese naval modernization has to be regarded by Koreans as potential threat and how Korean navy have to deal with it. In conclusion, this paper will draw the fruit of a lesson that whatever vulnerability remains in the Chinese naval capability, it may challenge for the ROK national security.

## MYTH AND VULNERABILITY OF THE PLA MODERNIZATION

### *Implication of Changing of China's military strategy*

One of the great legacies from Deng Xiaoping's reform and open policy since the mid 1980 was that China focused on the offensive and forward defensive aspect rather than defense-oriented military strategy. It is common that Chairman Mao's "People's war" has been an effective principle of deterrent precisely which was thought to compensate for its inferiors at all levels of naval strategy and doctrine.

This made the PLA to adopt defense military strategy. From Chinese point of view, "defense" means territory defense, a premise stemming from the principle of non-expansion. In Chinese, defense means "reactive" in coping with the threat of a Soviet land attack that has been China's traditional military strategy principle.

This people's war strategy underwent fundamental changes during the late 1970s just after Sino-Vietnam war in 1979, as it was modified by "modern conditions." First reflection was "People's war under modern conditions." The essence of the term "modern conditions" was a change in emphasis from a focus on populous defense to that on a relatively well trained and equipped professional military because the Chinese military were inadequate to hold back an invasion.

In December 1985, the Central Military Committee(CMC) of the Central Communist

Party(CCP) formally adopted his proposal and renamed the PLA “active defense strategy” in the new era.<sup>2</sup> “Active” means holding the invaders outside the country’s key areas, beyond the borders if necessary. It was the key to the new strategy, as it recognized that in a modern condition the enemy should strike from a great distance. Thus, “active defense” implied a determination to launch large-scale counter-offensive after blunting the enemy’s initial attack, and encompassed both defense against invasion and offence after a period of defense. This concluded that the PLA launched a number of far-reaching military modernizations to transform its capability from quantitative to qualitative development.

New doctrine of active defense needs high-tech condition that remains vast major problems to conduct modern warfare. An offensive-oriented strategy should be largely the high-tech defense strategy reflecting the PLA shifting emphasis from “people’s war under modern conditions” to “regional limited war under high-tech conditions.”

One of the most decisive catalysts for China’s post-Deng military strategic change was the United States-led high-tech war. For instance, the Gulf War erupted in 1991 shed the Chinese high command light on the future direction of military modernization. It called for the linkage of active defense strategy and high-tech defense strategy, which may mean power projection beyond the country’s land borders. This sustained to affect on Chinese military doctrine. These included the whole process of the Desert Shield and Desert Storm campaigns in line with the so-called “global war on terror(GWOT).”

All these have exerted a profound impact on the PLA military strategy. Chinese military has avidly consumed new military doctrines over the past several years and has keenly observed the changing nature of U.S. military doctrine and operation. The U.S, pre-emptive strike and the Revolution in Military Affairs(RMA) have provided Chinese military some lessons of the U.S.-led modern war with emphasis on high-technology: electronic warfare is decisive to the result of the entire war, high-tech and asymmetric weaponry is the key to victory in the future war, and naval and air power is crucial to success in modern warfare.<sup>3</sup> Both defense and offensive military strategy envisage the relationship between Deng Xiaoping’s doctrine of fighting a people’s war under the

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<sup>2</sup> You Ji, *The Armed Forces of China* (Sydney, Australia: Allen & Unwin, 1999), pp. 163-170 & Bernard D. Cole, *The Great Wall at Sea* (Annapolis, Maryland: Naval Institute Press, 2001), pp. pp. 159-178 & Andrew S. Erickson, Lyre J. Goldstein, William S. Murray, and Andrew R. Wilson, *China’s Future Nuclear Submarine Force* (Annapolis, Maryland: Naval Institute Press, 2007), pp. 22-42.

<sup>3</sup> You Ji, *The Armed Forces of China*, pp. 11-15.

modern conditions and the post-Deng strategy of fighting a future war under high-tech conditions. <Table 1> illustrates development of Chinese military strategies.

<Table 1: Development of Chinese Military Strategy>

Units	Past(1949)	Present(2010)	Future(2030-2050)
Doctrine	Reactive	Active	Pre-emptive strike and RMA
PLA	Defense under People's War	Active Defense under high-tech condition	Offensive under conditions of informatization
Navy	Coastal defense	Offshore active defense	Forward deployment & Force projection

There are certain implications of how changes of the Chinese military doctrine. First, the Chinese military operational areas should not be restricted within Chinese borders. For instance, air defense should be stretched even beyond the enemy's first airbase. Moreover, future nature of naval operation will be its expedient military operation in areas subject to overlapping territorial disputes.

Second, it reflected that the future war will face is not total war that involved massive manpower and large quantities of equipment and can last for some extended time, but high-tech limited war that is, by contrast, characterized by non-fixed campaign battlefield, fast change in operation formats, and little distinction between the front line and the defense rear.

Third, China needs new and modern military capabilities that will satisfy with futuristic military operational requirement. It would not surprise that the Chinese military praised the ideas related to asymmetric warfare i.e., the RMA. From Chinese military strategist's point of view, the possibility of adopting the RMA has been studied in the PLA as not just new concept of the PLA military strategy at the cutting edge of the implication of information war for traditional institutions such as military. As pointed out by Michael Pillsbury, the PLA attempted to develop the concept of the RMA to shake up the western notions about the backwardness of Chinese strategic planning.<sup>4</sup> The very fact that the RMA has adopted in the PLA is an indication of its effort to enter an exciting era of new military thinking, new military ideas and new military concepts.

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<sup>4</sup> John Culver and Michael Pillsbury, "Defense Policy and Posture II," Hans Binnendijk and Ronald N. Montaperto, *Strategic Trends in China* (Washington, D.C.: National Defense University, 1994), p. 14.

In general, China attempts to develop its military power not in quantity, but in quality. From the PLA strategists' point of view, the strong military power with great power status is viewed as a driving force for the development of nation-level science and technology for the whole nation and as the inevitable pattern of expected or unexpected armed conflicts beyond the century, rather than ideological preference and military thinking.

### ***Myth of the Chinese military threat***

There are three elements that the pace and scope of China's military modernization directed in last three decades: continued increasing its defense expenditures, rapid acquisition of modern and sophisticated weapon and system, and enhancement of organizational reform.

First, the Chinese military has the fastest-growing defense budget in Asia, amounting to a two-fold increase in real terms since 1988. It is very well known that the Communist nation's defense budget is very difficult to figure out what actual contents included. China's official military expenditures do not include large categories of expenditure, such as strategic forces, foreign acquisitions, military-related research and development(R&D), and its paramilitary forces. In quantity China is more likely to be the second largest for military spending, but it could become the world's largest military spending nation by 2030. Since there are numerous methodological problems in using some of these estimates to calculate defense burdens based on the dollar value of China's Gross Domestic Product(GDP), a rough estimate can be identified by different organizations as real Chinese defense spending. <Table 2> shows that China is already carrying a defense burden that is moderate to high, but comparable to other major military powers in the region. In 2008, the Department of Defense of the US estimated China's total military-related spending for 2007 could be between \$97 billion and \$139 billion.<sup>5</sup> Although experts may disagree about the exact amount of China's military expenditure, most arrive at the same conclusion: Beijing significantly increased its defense expenditures.

<Table 2: Ranges of Chinese Defense Budget Estimates>

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<sup>5</sup> Office of the Secretary of Defense, *Annual Report to Congress: Military Power of the People's Republic of China 2008* (Washington, D.C.: Department of Defense, 2008), p. 32.



Institutes	2001 Defense Burden (Percentage of GDP)
Official Chinese government	1.81
RAND Institute	2.44-3.09
U.S. Department of Defense	5.28
Council on Foreign Relations	3.58-5.45

Source: James C. Mulvenon, Murray Scot Tanner, Michael S. Chase, David Frelinger, David C. Gompert, Martin C. Libicki, Kevin L. Pollpeter, *Chinese Responses to U.S. Military Transformation and Implications for the Department of Defense* (Santa Monica, CA: RAND National Defense Research Institute, 2006), p. 19.

Second, with its fostering defense budget, China was known as major importer of sophisticated weapon and system. It is fact that, for the short term, China's defense planners remain actively interested in the acquisition of some aircraft carrier capability. The PLA has acquired or is in the process of acquiring hardware for MBT and APC, sophisticated and advanced strike fighter and long-range interceptor or bombers, i.e., Su-30 and MiG-31, blue water naval operational capability, i.e., Aegis-typed air defense destroyer, modified new anti-air missile, more powerful nuclear-powered submarines.

Third, discussion of the PLA modernization typically focused on new hardware too often neglects the key factor in military transformation: organizational reform. The number of PLA personnel has been reduced to *increase* rather than *decrease* military power. As China seeks to fund state-of-art technology and system management, low-skilled mass force structure should be top priority to modernize. Since the mid-1980s, the drive to substitute personnel quality for quantity has applied to the PLA of which numbers of the PLA was shrinking. Since new weapon and system are technologically intense, the Chinese military demanded to increase professional personnel expertise in conjunction with technologically advanced system.

At the dawn of a new millennium, the rise of China is one of the hectic and controversy regional security issues of whether the United States predominant power and influence will be declined in the foreseeable future.<sup>6</sup> The "China Threat" theory has focused on

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<sup>6</sup> Fareed Zakaria, "The Future of American Power: How America Can Survive the Rise of the Rest," *Foreign Affairs*, May/June 2008, pp. 18-48.

China's growing use of military.<sup>7</sup> From the Western point of view, an incident of aircraft between the U.S. Navy and the PLA Navy in 1999 that occurred in South China Sea, in which the PLAN fighters forced the U.S. intelligence collecting & surveillance aircraft landed in China, was one of the most examples to prove how the PLA has been regarded. The PLA Navy nuclear attack submarine threatened the naval operations of the aircraft carrier-based task force of the United States Navy in the Western Pacific sea in 2007 was another example to prove the Chinese military threat.

It was not surprising that in March 2008, the Department of Defense (DoD) of the United States issued its annual report to Congress titled *Military Power of the People's Republic of China 2008* and urged that China seems to be the greatest potential to compete militarily with the U.S. and field disruptive military technologies that could over time offset traditional U.S. military advantages. The RAND research argued that China appeared to adopt four options in response for the U.S. military superiority: conventional modernization "plus," subversion, sabotage, and information operations, missile-centric strategies and Chinese network-centric warfare.<sup>8</sup>

It is required that some of the PLA new production, *Luyang-II* Destroyer equipped the phased array 3-dimensional radar equivalent to the Aegis air defense radar built by the United States Navy, *Song*-class submarine and *Yuzhao*-class amphibious attack ship similar to the USN San Antonio class LPH would be recorded as astonishing achievement considered its lagged technology and quality management. It is also acknowledged that the level of the Chinese military modernization has been more fast and bold than most Chinese watchers' expectation. Compared to its neighbors' navies, the PLA military placed far stronger than their capabilities and it would be regarded as serious potential threats. Since 2000 Chinese military has been recorded as the fastest military force expansion of the world. More concretely, China is only Asian nation of which nuclear submarine has been operated for more than four decades and places the most feasible military power to acquire yet-to-be-determined full-fledged sea-borne air operation in the foreseeable future. There are many speculations that China is under the close survey of building its local designed heavy aircraft carrier within several

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<sup>7</sup> For the details of analyses of the Chinese rise and its military capabilities, see Kim Taeho, "A Reality Check: The 'Rise of China' and Its Military Capabilities toward 2010," *The Journal of East Asian Affairs*, Summer/Fall 1998, pp. 321-363.

<sup>8</sup> James C. Mulvenon, Murray Scot Tanner, Michael S. Chase, David Frelinger, David C. Gompert, Martin C. Libicki, Kevin L. Pollpeter, *Chinese Responses to U.S. Military Transformation and Implications for the Department of Defense* (Santa Monica, CA: RAND National Defense Research Institute, 2006), pp. xii-xvi.

years to go.<sup>9</sup>

### *Vulnerability of the PLA modernization*

Much uncertainty surrounds China's military power, in particular, in how that power might be used are main topics to be arisen. Because most of its weapons are obsolete and are outfitting themselves with modern technology-based operations, it is modernizing them and new weapons and systems are replacing the old at a fast pace.

Even through the world remains concerns about its rapid developing military hardware, China's ability to sustain military power at a distance remains limited and far less powerful than the competing powers, i.e., the U.S. military. China still lagged far behind the agile and advanced military power.

First, China's national defense sector as a share of the total official budget has not always been a winner in recent budgetary competitions. It has been lagging several other categories of expenditures, most notably social and educational expenses, and money spent on government administration.<sup>10</sup> China's true economic growth as main potential for its military modernization seems to be weak and fragile. It is truly impressive that the Chinese growth of the GDP recorded five times of the past due to its fastest-growing large economy. Continued economic development central to China's military modernization remains a foundation of the Chinese Communist Party(CCP)'s popular legitimacy and underwrites the bedrock of China's future development. In this respect, underlying weakness (e.g., demographic pressures, domestic political uprising, demanding massive amounts of resources, corruption, environment pollution, and economic disparity between urban and rural areas) threaten continued economic growth. Since initiating its reform and open door policy in 1978, China faced many problems to resolve its bubble-fueled economy.<sup>11</sup>

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<sup>9</sup> Christopher D. Yung argued in his research paper that if China's economy grown an average of 8 percent per year to the year 2010, China could afford to acquire a regionally oriented navy including aircraft carrier in 1996. His anticipation on the possibility of acquisition of Chinese aircraft carrier would be correct because of its plan to build it. Christopher D. Yung, *People's War at Sea: Chinese Naval Power in the Twenty-First Century* (Alexandria, Virginia: Center for Naval Analyses, 1996), pp. 49-53.

<sup>10</sup> James C. Mulvenon, Murray Scot Tanner, Michael S. Chase, David Frelinger, David C. Gompert, Martin C. Libicki, Kevin L. Pollpeter, *Chinese Responses to U.S. Military Transformation and Implications for the Department of Defense*, p. 20.

<sup>11</sup> Michael J. Enright, "Rethinking China's Competitiveness," *Far Eastern Economic Review*, October 2005, pp. 1620.

These are major priorities of allocating its economic capacity that are some beyond the control of China's leaders that would constrain its ability to achieve its defense reform. There are vast issues of which the Chinese budget may be diverted, i.e., social health improvement for ordinary people, national pension services for senior, social construction projects, etc.

Therefore, if there is reconsideration of the rise of China, military budget will be first one to go. It will hurt China's military expenditure and restricted its modernization and reform of armed forces. More seriously, corruption directly affects the PLA military modernization; bribery for advancement and promotion, unauthorized contracts and projects, and weapons procurement are all identified by the PLA as corruption problems. Official corruption in China is pervasive, structural, and persistent, due to high degree of state involvement in the economy and the weakness of the rule of law.<sup>12</sup>

Second, there would be no faithful statistic evidences that China has successfully produced its world first-class military hardware and system as same quality of the developed countries as the Western defense industries did. China appeared to produce certain world-class high-technology and has top-level defense industries that can export its hardware and software-related weapons and systems. None of Chinese defense industries listed on the world 100 top defense-related industry.<sup>13</sup>

In quantity its military capability was recorded at high level power, but in quality China's military ability was registered as less powerful capability because merely its application to second-hand technologies to enhance its military capability. <Table 3 indicates how inferior quality of Chinese military hardware would be compared with other major powers.

<Table 3: Comparison Chinese military hardware with other nations>

Unit	China	USA & Japan
Ground Force	Type 98 MBT / Type 99 MBT NORINCO Type WE 523 APC (6 x 6)	M-1 AZ Abrams MBT (USA) LAV-III(8 x 8) APC (USA) (8 x 8)

<sup>12</sup> Ken DeWoskin and Ian Stones, "Facing the China Corruption Challenge," *Far Eastern Economic Review*, September 2006, pp. 37-40.

<sup>13</sup> According to Jane's Defence Weekly based on the United Kingdom, most defense-related industries entail the United States and European, only companies in Asia are Japan, Australia and Korea.

Navy	Shi Lang/Kuznetsov-class CVGM Shang/Jin-class SS(B)N Song/Yuhan-class SS (Sterling) Luyang II -class DDG(Gas turbine) Jiangkai II -class FFG(Gas Turbine) Yuzhao-class LPH	Ford-class CVN(F) (USA) (Nuclear) Souryu-class SS (Japan) (AIP) Atago-class DDG (Japan) (Aegis) Zumbalt-class DDG (USA) (Integrated power system & motor propulsion) Freedom-class LCS (USA) (Water-jet propulsion) Hyuga-class(CVHG) (Japan) (Aegis)
Air Force	Su-30MKK / 27 FB-7A Fighter-bomber KJ-2000 AEW & C	F-35 JSF (USA) (Stealth) F-22 Raptor (USA) (Stealth) Boeing 737 AEW & C (Japan) (AAR)

Source: *Jane's Fighting Ships, 2006-2007, 2007-2008, and 2008-2009*, China sector, respectively; *Jane's All the World's Aircraft 2008-2009*, and *Jane's Armour and Artillery 2007-2008*.

These are widely acknowledged as first-level military related technologies for advanced weapon and system: composite materials, high-temperature materials, electro-optical devices, artificial intelligence, image recognition and microwave integrated circuits. None of them has produced in China.

Some of the recent high-profile acquisitions included the so-called fourth generation aircraft and newly-built ships and submarines are quite lower quality than Japan and Korea acquired and is inferior to its main potential adversary the United States. Capability of operational performance of the PLAN *Luyang-II* Destroyer, equipped the first phased-array air-defense sensor, and *Song*-class submarine remain far behind of Japan's and Korea's Aegis-equipped destroyer and Air Independent Propulsion(AIP)/Sterling-propulsion submarines. Whereas Chinese navy applied Russian-designed phased-array 3-D air search radar created by 1980s to her advanced destroyers in last two years, the United States navy and its allies' navies have updated Aegis air-defense system from baseline 1 to baseline 7 based on loaded capabilities since 1987.<sup>14</sup> China's air search radar's bandwidth is G-level including 4,000-6,000 MHz, compare with the U.S. Aegis' I-bandwidth ranging from 8,000-10,000 MHz. The

<sup>14</sup> Scott C. Truver, "Aegis evolves for the future," *Jane's Navy International*, July/August 2001, pp. 26-33.

Chinese navy over the horizontal operational coverage remain half of the USN capability.

Third, China's military leaders often confessed its military vulnerability that had very little confidence in conducting modern warfare. China has not articulated an explicit, overarching "national military strategy," "national defense policy," and "national security policy." In discussing strategy, they rarely use a Western "ends-ways-means" construct. Rather, they continued to modify a traditional military thinking of way of waging the war and personal ideology. China has never published its official military strategy in assessing the external threats and figuring out multiple blueprint of the development of its military force.<sup>15</sup>

Fourth, China has no overseas bases where military troops that can deploy its military troops and weapons there and its military personals and facilities, and no presence of the PLA troops out of Chinese territories. China has refrained from its willingness to dispatch or send its armed forces by deploying oversea associated with foreign military cooperation. China has refrained from intended dispatch its military mussels to neighboring countries on land, air and sea since the Korean War 1950-1953 and Sino-Vietnam war in 1989. China has few intentions to form with military-to-military alliances with like-minded countries. Apart from Sino-North Korea mutual military assistance treaty, very rare cases would be happened in terms of the military-to-military relationship. Considering its proximity with neighboring countries, China preferred to non-military strategic partnership with competing countries; Russia, India and Japan. China is developing its strategic partnership with the U.S.

Fifth, China's military ability to conduct modern warfare, i.e., joint military operations(JMO), network centric warfare(NCW), information operation(IO), and effect-based operation(EBO) seems to be weak and remains far belated path to go. Although China pursued to reform its warfare named by operation under "informational" conditions and improving "integrated joint operations" capabilities as the primary objectives for the Chinese military modernization, its substantial strength is still weak.<sup>16</sup> It is quite common that the Chinese ability of C4ISR, i.e., intelligence, reconnaissance

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<sup>15</sup> James C. Mulvenon, Murray Scot Tanner, Michael S. Chase, David Frelinger, David C. Gompert, Martin C. Libicki, Kevin L. Pollpeter, *Chinese Responses to U.S. Military Transformation and Implications for the Department of Defense*, chapter 3.

<sup>16</sup> Term of "Information" for changing of the Chinese military thought has been adopted by Dr You Ji since the late 1990. See You Ji, *The Armed Force of China*.

and surveillance, command and control, communications, and computer for information warfare and precision strike, still remain weak and vulnerable. China is still depending upon its vast amount manpower-intensive weapon system and procedure for naval warfare and its total combat power is based on the heavy, conscript-oriented military. A vaster armed force structure needs an unimaginable and robust defense budget to maintain and operate them at a first pace.

## REALITY AND CHALLENGE OF THE PLA NAVY MODERNIZATION

### *Focused on the maritime security*

There are some hard evidences to define it. First, the Chinese perception for maritime security come from self-defined assumption that China views that threat will be from the sea rather continent. China's changed perception of possible external threats in the future strategic environment has mirrored what the Chinese leadership learned lessons from its modern history.

China's focus on its maritime threats was summed up in a 1996 statement by a strategist who claimed that in the last 109 years, imperialists have repeatedly invaded China from the sea 470 times, 84 of these being serious invasions.<sup>17</sup> During the Cold War threats from the Soviet Union and the United States were major concern of the Chinese national security. Otherwise, the active projection of U.S. naval power is emerging for China's national security. Indeed, between 1946 and 1991, naval forces had participated in 83% of the 270 U.S. military interventions throughout the world, in half of them as exclusively naval operation.<sup>18</sup> It is from the sea what the Chinese strategists and scholars are more often accused them of pushing its "Neo-interventionism", "Eurasian strategy" and "Encirclement of China" as part of containing China."<sup>19</sup> Defending maritime border against threats is a major Chinese concern. Recent success in resolving border disputes with its continental neighbors, mainly Russia and India has feed Beijing to pay more attention to maritime issues.

Second, China is now recognizing the importance of the oceanic value. For this, China

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<sup>17</sup> Bernard D. Cole, *The Great Wall at Sea*, p. 9.

<sup>18</sup> Clark G. Reynolds, *Navies in History* (Annapolis, Maryland: Naval Institute Press, 1998), p. 235.

<sup>19</sup> Bernard D. Cole, *The Great Wall at Sea*, p. 11.

attempts to be a firm maritime power or sea power.<sup>20</sup> China has a strategic interest of its increasing dependence on foreign trade and rapidly increased energy consumption. As much as 50 percent of China's economy depends on foreign trade, about 90 percent of which is transported by ship. China's large and growing merchant fleet calls at more than six hundred ports in more than 150 countries.<sup>21</sup>

China's future economic growth will rely upon the resource from the offshore and littoral areas. Since the mid-1990 China has placed its energy security top agenda all together to ensure their national strategy. And India is similar to the Chinese experience. Japan and Korea has exercised their energy requirement as their first priority of the national security agenda. Most of maritime oil offshore areas are overlapped and overarched with regional maritime nations.

Third, Chinese naval power is still placing inferior to its neighboring nations. Regional navies are now prepared for more active and robust role and mission to represent national prestigious pride. The United States' predominant power has remained as honest stakeholder and balancer. Japan, Korea and Taiwan are eager to modernize their old and obsolete naval assets adopted high-technology and combat-management skill on its weapon and system. China remains the army-dominated military structure and is regarded as subordinated force to support the ground operation based on its basic military principle.

### *Far better accomplishment than other services*

The PLA Navy modernization has been slow, but gradually it has begun to produce visible results. The accomplishments of its naval modernization are much better than other services. <Table 4> illustrates what the Chinese navy has been accomplished by its naval modernization plan. China has acquired approximately 23 surface combatants, 15 submarines and more than 20 aircraft since 2000. None of the nation in the world could not match it.

<Table 4: Chinese navy's new productions 2000-2007>

Ship Type	Number	Weapons(Range)	Systems
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<sup>20</sup> There are many similar references to describe what China is seeking for national status: great power, hegemonic power, major power and regional power.

<sup>21</sup> Bernard D. Cole, *The Great Wall at Sea*, p. 63.



Destroyers	9 (Luzhou, Hangzhou, Luyang I / II, Luhai)	8 x YJ-62 (151nm) 8 x HHQ-9 (54nm)	Type 346 Phased- arrays 3-D
Frigates	11 (Jiangkai I / II, Jiangwei II)	8 x YK-83(C-802) (81nm) 32 x HHQ-16(VLS) (50nm)	Top Plate 3-D
Submarines - SSN - SSBN - SSK	15(Total) 2 (Shang) 1 (Jin) 12 (Song/Yuan), 7 (kilo)	12 x JL-2 SLBM (4,320nm) 6-21 Yu-3/Yu-4 Torpedos YJ-82 SSM(C-801A) (22nm)	Russian Victor-III 1500MW(N) Diesel- electric MTU 6.092H/P
Amphibious Vessels	1 (Yuzhao)	4 x LCAC, 2 x Z-8 Super Frel on	Type 364 Seagull
Supply ships	2 (Fuchi)	10,500ton Fuel, 250ton Water, 680 AMMUS & STORES	Type RzzT Similan RAS
Aircraft	24 (Su-30MK 2 Flanker)	10 x AAMs, Kh-35 ASMs	

Source: Stephen Saunder, *Jane's Fighting Ships 2008-2009* (Surrey, UK: Jane's Information Group, 2008), 119-159.

Such rise of the PLA Navy status within the PLA includes three reasons: rebirth of maritime security, pursuing consistent and coherent naval development strategy to cope with technical difficulties, and relationship between military and civil industry. Hard evidences can be elaborated to prove it. First, as Chinese maritime interests are increased, the PLA Navy has a classic and plausible rationale for building a modern navy resulting directly from its need to secure offshore resources.<sup>22</sup> This has placed an increasingly heavy onus on the navy to protect the maritime right and sovereignty. China takes advantage of the ubiquitous striking force of protecting the maritime boundary. The rebirth of maritime security needs the Chinese navy to safeguard national homeland security and its ability to expand to foreign nations.

Second, the PLA Navy employs coherent and consistent naval strategy for its entire naval modernization program. During the Qing dynasty, China launched to build a modern navy under the “self-strengthening” slogan that could be elaborated as

<sup>22</sup> Commander Dominic DeScisciolo, U.S. Navy, “Red Aegis,” *U.S. Naval Institute Proceedings*, July 2004, 56-58.

“maintaining fundamental structure and system while learning the Western for practical use.” Since then, its coherent and consistent naval development strategy has applied for its military modernization under the principle: purchases abroad, reverse engineering of foreign technology and system and create indigenous production.<sup>23</sup>

One of the objectives of its military modernization the PLA faced is technology and system. The Chinese leaders have implemented its three-phased long-term military technology development plan that has been elaborated as follows: acquire agile and advanced weapon and system from foreign nations, replace old assets by re-engineering its technology and system and resolve rudimentary technical problems, and create its own indigenous ships and aircraft in the near future. Admiral Liu Huaqing formulated the so-called “three-phased strategic development plan by 2050”.<sup>24</sup>

The PLA Navy modernization strategy constitutes relatively systemic process to meet the goals and objectives of its strategy as the early Republic did in the 19<sup>th</sup> century. For the time being, even though there are almost all derivations of Soviet/Russian designs, it has added to its ranks about newly-designed destroyer, and frigate each year with a modest program of naval growth in line with three-phased steps of naval modernization program. China has sustained its long-term plan since the early day of Republic: acquire agile and advanced weapon and system from foreign nations, replace old assets by re-engineering its technology and system and resolve rudimentary technical problems and create its own indigenous ships and aircraft in the foreseeable future. The Chinese navy has successfully produced indigenous ships, submarines and aircraft during the past decade or so. <Table 5> illuminates how the Chinese navy was eager to implement this strategy.

<Table 5: PLA Navy three-phased development>

Phase 1	Phase 2	Phase 3
Import hardware from foreign nations	Re-engineering specifications on imported systems apart	Create indigenous product
12 x kilo-class SS in 1995 4 x Sovremenny-class DDGHM	5 x Jin-class SSBN in 2007 2 x Shang-class SSN in 2006	100 x Houbei-class PGGFs

<sup>23</sup> The “Self-strengthening effort” was influenced by the Confucian tradition that was part of a case of ideology defeating professionalism.

<sup>24</sup> Bernard D. Cole, *The Great Wall at Sea*, p. 172.

in 1999 1 x Kuznetsov-class CVGM in 2002	1 x Yaun & 13 Song-class SS in 1999 and 2007 2 x Luyang-II DDGHM in 2004	
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Source: Stephen Saunder, *Jane's Fighting Ships 2008-2009* (Surrey, UK: Jane's Information Group, 2008), 119-159.

Third, there is codependent relationship between the PLA Navy and the burgeoning Chinese Shipbuilding industry.<sup>25</sup> The Chinese shipbuilding industry has rapidly developed since the late 1990 as the same trend as Korean and Japanese shipbuilding development during the 1970s. <Table 6> shows the trends of the increased ships built in Chin during the last five years.

<Table 6: Ships built in the world in total tonnage>

Nation	2001		2002		2003		2006	
China	1830	5.85%	2836	8.50%	3760	10.41%	14520	19%
Japan	12020	38.41%			12690	35.12%	29000	38%
Korea	11610	37.10%			13680	37.86%	25000	33%
World	31290	100%	33380	100%	36130	100%	76420	100%

Source: Yan Kai, *R & D of Ship Science and Technology in China & CSSRC*, Presented by China Ship Scientific Research Center, May 2007 in Seoul.

Facing increased requirements of the PLA Navy new shipbuilding, cooperative relationship between the Chinese navy and Chinese shipbuilding industry has been strengthened in recent years.<sup>26</sup> The “State Planning Commission” and the “Commission of Science Technology and Industry for National Defense” sponsored approximately 30% of total R&D fund to promote the “design and manufacturing technologies of naval ships with advanced quality and performance of naval fleet” between 2001 and 2005 based on its 5 Years Plan.<sup>27</sup> Many maritime-related institutes and universities in China have participated in program of strengthening the technical innovation and keen competition in applying to the new ships. <Table 7> listed major participants of joining R & D ship science and technology in the China Ship Scientific Research Center (CSSRC) in 2007.

<sup>25</sup> Michael C. Grubb, “Chinese Shipbuilding: Growing Fast, but how good is it?” *U.S. Naval Institute Proceedings*, March 2008, pp. 44-51.

<sup>26</sup> Yan Kai, *R & D of Ship Science and Technology in China & CSSRC*, Presented by China Ship Scientific Research Center, May 2007 in Seoul.

<sup>27</sup> Ibid.

<Table 7: List of major participants of development of ships in China>

Institutes	Universities
Jiangnan Shipyard, Dalian New Shipyard, Dalian Shipyard, China Ship Scientific Research Center, Maine Design and Research Institute of China, Shipbuilding Technology Research Institute. China Ship Scientific Research Center. Marine Design and Research Institute of China, Shanghai Merchant Ship Design and Research Institute, Shipbuilding Technology Research Institute,	Shanghai Jiao Tong University (Shanghai), Harbin Engineering University (Harbin), Hua Zhong University of Science and Technology (Wuhan), Wuhan Technical University (Wuhan), Naval Engineering University (Dalian), Dalian Technical University (Dalian), East China Shipbuilding Institute (Zhengjiang), Tianjing University (Tianging), Hua Nan Technical University (Guangzhou), Zhong Shan University(GuangZhou)

Source: Yan Kai, *R & D of Ship Science and Technology in China & CSSRC*, Presented by China Ship Scientific Research Center, May 2007 in Seoul.

The efforts for promoting the science and technology of the new warships in Chinese navy mainly come from state-sponsored research programs. Some of ship's integrated design technology and fabrication technology, including vibration and noise come from corporation-sponsored research programs, shipyard-sponsored research programs and natural science foundation of China-sponsored projects. These research and development programs include mainly for strengthening the technical innovation, developments of the technologies of designing and manufacturing the new types of warships, and the high sea-going performance.

Establishment of close relationship between the PLA Navy and civilian shipbuilding industry will provide the Chinese navy opportunities for implementing its ambitious naval modernization programs. As complementary cooperation between client, the Chinese navy, and provider, shipbuilders, has been established, the PLA Navy may receive great benefit of producing naval vessels. As <Table 8> shown, indeed, the Chinese government is pursuing an especially ambitious civil-military program, studying

“science and technology cooperative ties” with the universities, colleges and institutions, Chinese navy was able to reduce time line of building warships and submarines. The Chinese navy needed only 2–3 years to produce new naval assets in its own shipyards. It was proved by great accomplishments that have been made in building new types of naval assets: U.S. Aegis destroyer-like air defense ship, submarine with modified evolutionary designs, stealth-effected frigate, and amphibious assault ship capable of sealift and power protection operation, and new fast attack craft with wave-piercing catamaran and likely to be of aluminum alloy construction with Radio Cross Section(RCS) reduction measures.<sup>28</sup> These were built in the Dalian New Shipyard, Dalian Shipyard, Shanghai Hudong-Zhonghua Shipyard, Shanghai Jiang Nan Shipyard, Huludao Shipyard, Guangzhou Huangpu Shipyard, Shanghai Qiuxin Shipyard and Wuhan Shipyard.

<Table 8: Chinese Naval Shipbuilding Time Line>

Steps	Phase 1	Phase 2	Phase 3
What to do	Acquire platforms, Take know-how & skill, Learn how assets are made	Create design with Chinese specifications, Build Prototype, Develop indigenous items	Mass produce, Fill inventories
Expectation	10 years	12–15 years	5–10 years
Submarines	11 years (Kilo class)	6 years (Song class)	6 years (Wuhan class)
Surface Combatants	7 years (Sovremenny-class)	2–3 years (Luyang I & Jiangkai I class)	2 years (Luyang II & Jiangkai II class)
Amphibious Ship	14 years (Yuting-class)	2 years (Yuzhao class)	“TBD”

Source: Stephen Saunder, *Jane's Fighting Ships 2008–2009* (Surrey, UK: Jane's Information Group, 2008), 119–159.

### ***Changing its naval strategy from “brown water” to “quasi-blue water”***

The maritime boundary the Chinese designates is of a China that has a hard-edged view

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<sup>28</sup> *ibid.*

of its national interest. The chief architect of China's maritime border was Admiral *Liu Huaqing*, commander of the PLA Navy from 1982 to 1987 and then vice chairman of the powerful CMC to September 1997. As early as 1980s, he has delineated two contingency-based maritime boundaries that the nation must be able to control: First Island Chain, and Second Island Chain. The former includes the Yellow Sea, facing Korea; and Japan; the western East China Sea, including Taiwan; and the South China Sea. The latter is covering from a north-south line from the Kuril through Japan, the Bonin, the Mariana, and the Caroline. These would mean the PLA Navy control of all of East Asia's vast ocean areas.<sup>29</sup>

The ultimate stage of Admiral Liu's maritime strategy is that the PLA Navy becoming a global navy for the future. It is fair to say that these significant maritime areas are the widest-ranging Chinese naval expeditionary operation since the voyages of *Zheng He* of the early 15<sup>th</sup> century.<sup>30</sup> Indeed, the PLA Navy expanded its operational areas and established certain concept of strategic maritime boundary beyond the territorial area.

The Chinese navy modernization program aims to change its nature of the PLA Navy naval strategy from "brown water" force to "green/blue water" navy enable to secure its vast maritime territorial claims with modern combat capability. For long time, the Chinese navy became "brown water" navy refers to littoral ocean areas, within about one hundred nautical miles of the coastal line. Term of "blue water navy" is accomplished by the PLA Navy can be achieved its objective to redress a number of legacies left by the era of the weak and coastal navy.

At this juncture, the Chinese navy wants to change the goal of its maritime strategy of its national strategy from traditional "coastal defense" to "offshore active defense."<sup>31</sup> The term of "offshore" is medium of maritime area paradigm somewhere between "coastal" and "high sea" and it, in this construct, has been variously defined, ranging from 150 to 600 nautical miles. Reference of the term "offshore active defense" means "quasi-blue water navy" of which operational capability placed somewhat between "coastal defense" and "full ocean-going green water fleet." It is conceivable that the Chinese navy's goal of its operational capability is not "blue water navy," but somehow

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<sup>29</sup> For the Chinese source, see *Dangdai Zhongguo Haijun* (唐代中國海軍) (北京, 1987), 478.

<sup>30</sup> James R. Holmes and Toshi Yoshihara, "Soft Power at Sea: Zheng He and Chinese Maritime Strategy," *U.S. Naval Institute Proceedings*, October 2006, pp. 34-38.

<sup>31</sup> Alexander C. Hunag, "The PLA Navy at War, 1949-1999: From Coastal Defense to Distant Operations," Mark A Ryan, David M. Finkelstein and Micheal A. McDevitt, *Chinese Warfighting: The PLA Experience since 1949* (Armonk, NY: M.E. Sharpe, 2003), pp. 241-269.

of medium capability between “green water navy” and “blue water navy.”

*Developing its naval doctrine from “Fleet-in-being” to “Sea Control”*

Since the establishment of the PRC in 1949, “fleet-in-being” was applied to its navy doctrine and prevailed for Chinese navy’s operational concept. The PLA Navy adopted very much “fleet-in-being” principle to its defensive naval strategy. This dictates that Chinese navy could not dispute command of the sea due to its strategic employment of an inferior fleet and it should act as a deterrent if a limited number of ships are deployed to a specific area. During the early stage of its development, the PLA Navy has been assigned to three priority missions: avoiding unnecessary fleet-to-fleet sea battle, ensure its fleet force *per se* and building up its capable and enable fleet over a long-term. These missions meant that the PLA Navy conducted “fleet-in-being” tactics to preserve its inferior fleet capability.

In the late 1980s, as the PLA Navy changed its strategic concept to “active defense” posture, its navy doctrine was shifted from “fleet-in-being” to “command of the sea.” The latter is part of a maritime strategy paradigm *quasi*-blue water operational capability. The main reason why the Chinese navy appears to change its naval doctrine is that as China’s economic growth increases, major threats for China has originated from its vulnerable maritime areas. In this vein, the Chinese navy has shifted its naval doctrine from fleet-in-being tactics to more robust and versatile sea control aimed at command of the confined sea.

In maritime strategic theory, command of the sea could be either general or local or it could be either permanent or temporary because it would be difficult to destroy the enemy completely in a battle and it was something that was difficult to achieve.<sup>32</sup> In general, the fleet’s objective was indirectly either to secure the command of the seas or to prevent the enemy from securing. General command of the seas would exist when the enemy nation is no longer able to send fleet to sea to interfere with operations. Thus, command of the seas did not have to be complete, but rather control of the sea could be achieved.

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<sup>32</sup> Alfred Thayer Mahan, *Naval Strategy* (London: Sampson, Low, Marston and Company, 1911), p. 199 & Julian Corbett, *Some Principles of Maritime Strategy* (Annapolis, Maryland: Naval Institute Press, 1988), p. 91.

The Chinese naval strategists argued that navy doctrine with the Chinese characteristic, known as “limited command of the sea” concept that would be suitable for modern China. Therefore, the concept of control of the sea could be applied to the Chinese navy doctrine. From the Chinese point of view, command of the sea did not have to be complete. It is well known for Chinese navy that various degrees of command of the sea can be achieved because the limited and local command of the sea will occur a specific theater or area and usually only for a specific duration or operation.

***Conducting its naval operation, not “Forward ....from the sea,” but “Anti-access”***

Threats to China in the future will not originate transoceanic naval operation through the high sea as the United States Navy did during the Cold War, but will originate from either closer to the shore in the littorals or in a specific geographic confined sea under forward deployment concept.<sup>33</sup> In this regard, the Chinese naval strategists pointed out that the major powers dominated “maritime domain” awareness of which area is very important for China’s economic activities and development.<sup>34</sup>

The PLAN is not possessed any oversea naval bases of which capability projects naval power and forward deployment capability of its fleet. Moreover, it is very little possibility that the Chinese navy will require to build oversea naval base to deploy its fleet force that needs land-based logistic support and crew recruiting activities. Even though there are speculation that the Chinese navy attempted to build oversea naval station in Burma and Pakistan, China does not seem to operate its oversea naval bases of which capability constitutes forward deployment.

Rather, the PLA Navy set up its operational concept to conduct “anti-access” operation. China’s navy should establish its certain capability to disrupt the freedom of action to achieve control of a designated sea area. For the Chinese military, there are many talks about the importance of so-called “strategic chokepoints” around the world.<sup>35</sup> The PLA Navy argued that the Chinese naval operational concept appears to use limited naval assets to deny the enemy’s sea control in the confined sea.

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<sup>33</sup> The United States formulated new naval strategy as “.... From the Sea” in 1994 and reversed it as “Forward ....From the Sea” in 1996.

<sup>34</sup> In naval theory, maritime domain indicates the series of jurisdictional zones that surrounds the coast of a state. It includes territorial seas and the Exclusive Economic Zone.

<sup>35</sup> The term of “strategic chokepoint” has been used by Dr John H. Noer in his research paper in 1996. See Dr John H. Noer with David Gregory, *Chokepoints: Maritime Economic Concerns in Southeast Asia* (Washington, D.C.: National Defense University, 1994), p. 3.



In this regard, the Chinese navy argued that anti-access operation should be conducted by underwater asset, i.e., submarine that will be major tool to execute this operation. For this, the PLA Navy modernization programs focused on various type of new conventional and nuclear-powered submarine shipbuilding. In order to promote its underwater operational capabilities and resolve its rudimentary problems of implementing its ambitious submarine modernization as analyzed above would remain to linger on the PLA Navy, the Chinese navy has purchased Russian-designed Kilo-class submarines and produced *Jin*-class, *Wuhan*-class and *Song*-class submarines by its own design and structure in the Chinese shipbuilding yards in China.<sup>36</sup> It would not be surprised that China now possesses more submarines than Russia and registered as the third largest naval power of the world.

***Transforming its naval warfare from “platform-based warfare” to “network/system-centric warfare”***

One of the most impressive impacts on the Chinese military modernization is what future war seems to be. Since 1990s, major lessons have learned from Desert Storm, Kosovo air campaign, Operation Iraq Freedom(OIF) and Operation Endurance Freedom(OEF) where air/naval power played crucial role and U.S. superiority in military technology and operational power were graphically demonstrated, may well be that Chinese military power for at least the next fifty years will lack the capability for successful direct confrontation with the United States military forces.

The Chinese military leaders emphasized that the future naval operations will be conducted not by “platform-to-platform” warfare on the basis of their own weapons and systems equipped, but by “point-to-point” warfare operating as “task fleet”<sup>37</sup> with integrated networking as they witnessed the United States-led GWOT in 2003 and 2005. It is fact that in the future war “point” can be elaborated as “network” or “system”.

The Chinese navy has operated its three geographic fleets and its operational concept almost wholly dependent on individual ship, submarine and aircraft operations

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<sup>36</sup> Stephen Saunders, *Jane's Fighting Ships 2008-2009* (Surrey, UK: Jane's Information Group, 2008), Chinese navy.

<sup>37</sup> There are two concepts of defining “fleet”: one means type organizational command of placing in ashore to support supply and logistics to its forces, another is task organizational command in formulating mission-based task fleet in deploying at sea in the sustained period for naval operation.

respectively. These PLA Navy type organizations have been applied by its geographic defensive concept. It includes three fleets: North Sea Fleet covered Yellow sea and aiming at the deterrence of Russia threat, East Sea Fleet in charge of oversee its rivalry, Japanese Maritime Self-defense Force(JMSDF) and Taiwan, and South Sea Fleet to monitor its Southeast Asia navies' maritime activity focused on the disputable areas, Vietnam and Taiwan. The Chinese naval assets divided into three district Area of Operational Responsibility(AOR) and deployed to its three fleets conducted individual operation in conjunction with naval warfare to maintain its survival against the enemy's threats. This is based on concept of "platform-to-platform" symmetric naval warfare. It refers to simple operational concept to be conducted by individual ships acting on the basis of their own sensors, weapons, and communications and control systems. The general trend of the Chinese naval modernization illustrated that the platform-to-platform replacement program.

This operational concept constituted the lack of the Chinese navy's capability of ensuring its maritime interests beyond the territorial sea, AOR and disputable sea areas located at the East and South China Seas. Since the late of 1990s China has struggled to establish a comprehensive task fleet, adopting an expeditionary operational concept as the Western major naval powers did during the late 19<sup>th</sup> century. The task fleet is a temporary grouping of assets, units under commandership of on-scene-commander, formed for the purpose of carrying out a specific operation or mission. It is the highest level in a functional or task organization in comprising of various naval assets and conduct complex missions for the sustainable operational period at the high sea.

Expeditionary operations will be assigned to the Chinese task fleet that can be initiated at short notice, consisting of forward deployed, or rapidly deployable, self-sustaining forces tailored to achieve a clearly stated objective in a foreign country. Effective warfare in this complex operation requires the effective integration of shipboard, airborne, and shore-based systems and needs operational integration of various naval warfare, including ASW, AAW, ASuW, and in modern naval warfare in specific.

There are limited systems integration in China's naval assets, and only basic central combat command and control systems. The PLA Navy recognized its system integration deficiencies, as well as the difficulties it faces networking them. The task of integrating naval assets including platforms, weapons and systems is strenuous task in order to create its power projection capability in conjunction with the preparation for the future

naval battles.

As the Chinese navy attempts to operate multi-mission task fleet, this weakness in the integrated command and control system will be major task of its modernization plan. It is the fact that the Chinese navy fleet needs network-centric warfare to operate the task fleet alone.<sup>38</sup> Adopt of the network-centric warfare in operating the task fleet will have to be very carefully orchestrated to prevent their damages by the enemy's attacks under its inferior position.

One China watcher argued that the Chinese military is considering the concept of the RMA to reverse the course. As pointed out by Michael Pillsbury, the concept of the RMA has shaken up the Chinese military, and the PLA regarded the RMA as the best option of compensating its backwardness of Chinese strategic planning.<sup>39</sup> This is fact that the PLAN is beginning to consider an asymmetric mean of only partially integrated, automated sensor, command and control system and weapon systems.

### *Some Achilles' heels of the 21<sup>st</sup>-century Chinese navy*

Technological transformation of the Chinese navy is slow and needs more effort to invest its resources to build modern navy. Even though the Chinese navy was identified as a self-defined successful achievement on its modernization process, its warships, submarines, aircraft and weapons and systems on board remain far less in meeting its new Requirement of Operational Capabilities(ROCs) to prepare for the future naval battle. There are certain areas to discuss about the vulnerabilities of the Chinese navy operational ability.

First, China's military technology is still largely based on 1980s-era Soviet technology and its ships, submarines, aircraft, weapons and systems seem to be adopted by less advanced modern technologies. It is very much common that the Chinese military technologies are more than two decades behind the western naval powers. Although the PLA Navy has achieved some extent of successful modernization in line with vast volume weapons and systems, tangible question still remain and China needs technical assistance from developed nation and navies.

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<sup>38</sup> You Ji, *The Armed Forces of China*, pp. 160-200.

<sup>39</sup> John Culver and Michael Pillsbury, "Defense Policy and Posture II," p. 14.

The PLA Navy current naval weapons and systems adopted far less sophisticated and advanced technology and quality management process and its performances of these have revealed difficult to enter the full-fledged service. For combat system, there are vast technological predicaments to reduce its combat system by concise and compact on the various sub-compartment of the PLA naval asset. It was good example that China's most advanced microelectronics facilities were six to eight years behind the late 1990s' state of the art – virtually halving China's gap behind world standards a decade earlier – and at current rates of progress could catch up by around 2008.<sup>40</sup> This would provide the Chinese navy to increase its ship's size and cause a reason not able to conduct futuristic naval warfare and tactics integrated among its aircraft, surface combatants and submarines.

Second, fleet air defense is the most serious question of the Chinese navy that represented the lack of effective area AAW defense – the ability to defend not just individual ships, but task fleet of naval forces. The *Luda* class destroyer has no surface-to-air missile system; the *Luhu* and the *Luhai* classes destroyers are equipped with only limited “point air defense” system. It was in 2004 that the Chinese navy produced the first Aegis-liked *Luyang-II* class air defense destroyer capable of conducting “area air defense” system. As long as the PLAN does not have any aircraft carriers in commission, under construction, or under negotiation for foreign purchase, despite continuing speculation in the press, its AAW capability to detect and process multiple targets simultaneously, especially targets with a crossing component in their fire-control solution still remains problematic.<sup>41</sup>

In this sense, the possibility of the Chinese acquirement of aircraft carrier will be very high. Indeed, it would play a very effective air-defense mission platform and would project its effective naval power from the sea as same as the USN did. Many Chinese military analysts argued that the acquirement of the indigenous aircraft carrier appears to be, at least, the best option to improve its air-defense capability for its independent fleet to conduct expeditionary naval operation against powerful and predominant enemy in the high seas. Since the late 1970s, many speculation of China's possibility of acquiring aircraft carrier has been circulated and the anticipating when the Chinese

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<sup>40</sup> China's most advanced integrated circuit joint ventures were using 6-inch, 0.8-micron technology to produce 4-Mb DRAM chips, with plans for projects that would soon introduce 0.5-micron technology – a significant gap behind the most advanced Western technology, 0.18 micron at that time. See Roger cliff, *The Military Potential of China's Commercial Technology*, MR-1292-AF (Santa Monica, Calif.: RAND Corporation, 2001), pp. 11–14.

<sup>41</sup> Commander Dominic DeSciociolo, U.S. Navy, “Red Aegis,” pp. 56–58.

navy seems to acquire it appears to be one of the buzzwords of judging development of the Chinese navy. Aircraft carrier remains impending task for the Chinese navy because China has very little time to develop new navy by leaping up one step forward against the major rivalry.

Third, the PLA Navy underwater operational capability remains very limited.<sup>42</sup> The Chinese navy has accomplished almost exclusive Anti-Submarine Warfare(ASW) capacity in using hull-mounted, active, medium-frequency sonar. These systems are at least less updated and simplest mechanism. It was recent that the PLA Navy adopted and equipped with towed, variable-depth sonar although this uses the 1960s active, medium-frequency sound transmission. The PLA Navy is not taking advantage of available ASW technology, some of it forty years old. It is common that detecting submarines at the shallow waters where placed sea surrounding the Korean peninsula, especially from a surface ship, is a very difficult process. Moreover, the Chinese navy lacks significant airborne and apparently shorts of seabed ASW resources. There are only a dozen old maritime patrol ASW aircraft assigned to the airborne ASW mission; China does not appear to have deployed bottom listening arrays, known as “towed phased-array passive sonar” in using low-frequency technology, in its coastal waters.

Some of the media revealed that the Chinese navy has faced huge amount of yet-to-be resolved underwater operational problems. It is demonstrated that China needs to purchase modern and updated underwater warfare weapons and systems from foreign navies to resolve the rudimentary problems. Most the PLA Navy current naval underwater weapons and systems came from the former Soviet Union’s and Russia’s obsolete underwater sounding technology. More seriously, every movement of these submarines can be detected by the JMSDF and USN. The more the PLA Navy emphasized technology, the greater importance the manpower required. Modern naval warfare is understood to require educated, technologically competent personnel. While the PLA Navy remains, in terms of manpower, the largest navy in the Pacific, the importance of science and technology is not underlined.

Fourth, “People’s war at sea” still remains the essential guideline for its education & recruit, doctrine, operation and tactics. How the PLA Navy is manned and trained is another major issue that deadly lagged its modernization behind. The Chinese navy

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<sup>42</sup> See Andrew S. Erickson, Lyre J. Goldstein, William S. Murray, and Andrew R. Wilson, *China’s Future Nuclear Submarine Force*, Introduction.

manpower has been influenced by particular attention to the interplay between concerns for professional expertise and political reliability, and interaction between military-oriented missions and non-military activities.

Despite the draw-down in overall naval strength in recent years, the numbers and quality of naval personnel are not improved to manage and operate its state-of-the-art technology at the cost of high-skilled/trained manpower. Since naval systems are technologically intense in wake of its economic and military reform, the PLA Navy has difficulty retaining the best-qualified and highly trained enlisted and officer personnel whose expertise is described in the importance of the organic integration of man and weaponry. The normal demands of recruiting, educating, training, and managing does not place top priority of the PLA Navy modernization programs.

Innovative operational doctrine can compensate for some manpower shortages and material shortfalls. The locus of doctrinal development within the PLA Navy is not obvious. According the Chinese warfare publication, there is little clarification of what kind of level of warfare in terms of the naval warfare. Very little remarks of how the Chinese military can describe the levels of warfare to employ its military forces to attain strategic, operational and tactical goals through the objectives of national defense policy by the application of force or the threat of force.<sup>43</sup> As the number of PLA Navy personnel has been increased to meet the Chinese navy efficiency and potential, no area of inquiry into its navy is less clear than how that force manages and trains its personnel in line with naval doctrine.

As long as the PLA Navy appears to focus on implementing a modern navy capable of carrying out at least an offshore active defense maritime strategy, new operational doctrine through increasingly intense and advanced operational training and exercises plays a stronger and decisive role in achieving China's national security goals.<sup>44</sup> The PLA Navy recent purchases, especially from Russia, indicated its determination to improve the pace of manpower capability through both maintenance and operation of

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<sup>43</sup> For instance, the Chinese military did not adopt basic three primary categories of naval warfare principle. See Chen Fangyou(陳訪友), *Naval Campaign Teaching Manuals* (海軍戰役學教程) (Beijing(北京): National Defense University(國防大學校), 1991). Thereby, Campaign means intermediate term of strategic-operational art-tactical level, rather than one of war-campaign-battle levels.

<sup>44</sup> Office of the Secretary of Defense, *Annual Report to Congress: Military Power of the People's Republic of China 2008* (Washington, D.C.: Department of Defense, 2008), p. 32. Rear Admiral Michael McDevitt, "Where is China's Navy headed?" *U.S. Naval Institute Proceedings*, May 2001, pp. 58-61.

the weapon and system. The Chinese navy's acquisition of two crucial purchases, *Sovremenny*-class missile destroyers and *Kilo*-class conventional submarines, caused its own education and training system and demonstrated a determinative impact in regulate new guideline and doctrine, especially in view of each of the geographic fleets having its own education and training programs. The PLA Navy has very few experiences in engaging fleet-to-fleet battle in the modern age. Discussion with the PLA Navy officers shown that significant doctrinal development occurs at the fleet and/or military region level, which could lead to significant differences among the operational fleets.

As a result, China still needs to acquire modern technology and system that the PLA relied on foreign nations' skills and experiences in recognition both of the limited capabilities of China's military industrial complex and foreign expertise. <Table 9> indicates that the PLA Navy is the third largest in the world, trailing only the United States and Russia, but in reality there are ample reasons to talk about different story.

<Table 9: Dependence the Chinese navy upon foreign weapon and system>

Supplier	Weapon & System (No. Ordered)	Year(s) of Delivery	Platform Application
USA	GE LM 2500 Gas turbine (2)	1990-1994	1x Luhu DDG
France	100mm Naval Guns (2)	1989	1 Jianghu II FFG
	Castor-2 Fire Control Radars (14)	1994-2002	HQ-7 SAM system in 2x Luhu, 1x Luhai, 3x Luda I DDGs, and 8x Jiangwei II FFGs
	DRBV-15 Sea Tiger Radars (6)	1987-1999	2x Luhu, 2x Luhai, 2x Luda I DDGs
	DUBY-23 Sonars (5)	1991-1999	2x Luda, 1x Luhai, 2x Luhu DDGs
	DUBY-43 Sonars (2)	1994-1996	2x Luhu DDGs
	R-440 Crotale SAMs Helos (28)	1990-2002	2x Luhu, 1x Luhai, 3x Luda I DDGs, and 8x Jiangwei II FFGs
	AS-365/AS-565 Dauphin Helos (28)	1987-1991	Various
	SEMT-Pielstick diesel (28)	2003-2008	4x Luyang I/II DDGs 6x Jiangkai I/II FFGs 1x Yuzhao LHP

Russia	Ka-27PL (Helix-A) Helos (10)	1997-2000	Various
	Top Plate Air Search Radars (4)	2004	2x Luzhou and 2x Luyang I DDGs
	MR-90/Front Dome FC Radars (8)	2004	2x Luzhou and 2x Luyang I DDGs
	48N6/SA-10 Grumble SAMs (144)	2002	2x Luzhou DDGs
	9M317/SA-17 Grizzly SAMs (264)	2005	2x Luyang I DDGs (also for Sovremenny DDGs)
	Kilo class Submarines (12)	1995-2006	13x Song SS
	Sovremenny class Destroyer (4)	1999-2006	2x Luyang II DDGs 4x Jiangkai II FFGs
Germany	Mtu16V 396 SE(52)	1999-2006	13x Song SS
Italy	RTN-20S Fire Control Radars (17)	1991-2001	2x Luhui, 1x Luda III, 1x Luhai DDGs, and 6 or 7 Houhjian PTGs
UKraine	DA80 Gas Turbine(21)	1996-2007	2x Luzhou DDGs 1x Luhai DDGs 4x Luyang I/II DDGs

Source: *Jane's Fighting Ships*, 1980-1981, 1990-1991, 2001-2002, 2003-2004, 2004-2005, 2006-2007, 2007-2008, and 2008-2009, China sector, respectively.

### ***Implementation of a “tortoise and precautions” strategy***

These reasons led Chinese leaders conduct very much precautions strategy to implement its ambitious naval modernization program. Since the year 1949 when the PRC was formally established, the PLA Navy fought at sea against relative weak adversaries, Philippines and Vietnam, not to mention Taiwan.<sup>45</sup> Since then, however, threats the Chinese leadership perceived against its national security concerns stemmed entirely from more powerful and stronger than China, i.e., the Soviet Union and the United States as they did during the Korean War and Vietnam war. More seriously, these threats come from the sea, not land where China fought Japan, the Soviet Union, Vietnam, India, and the United States in land during different period. None of those wars involved significant Chinese naval participation. Recently the sea provided Japan and the United States with a haven from which China could be attacked.

The Chinese navy may not match its naval strength to the United States. Rather, the

<sup>45</sup> China has been willing to use calibrated force in Korea(1950-53), in the Taiwan Strait(1954-55, 1958, 1962, and 1995-96), against India(1962), against the Soviet Union(1969), against Vietnam(1963-73, 1974, 1979 and 1988), and against the Philippines(since 1995).



PLAN has to rely on speed, mobility, flexibility, and initiative in a contest with the United States Navy. A logical step in such a conflict would be to gain the initiative through preemption. This does not necessarily require a “bolt from the blue” but could be achieved by seizing the initiative at a time of significant naval weakness on the part of the adversary.<sup>46</sup> This is a major reason why the PLA Navy decided to purchase the Russian *Sovremenny*-class destroyer and its *Sunburn* ship-to-ship missile can disrupt the USN aircraft carrier-based task fleet before attacked by the latter.

China had very bad bitter memory of adopting Soviet technology and experience to its naval forces improvement plan. In the early 1950s the Soviet Union as China’s ideological partner and suddenly withdrawn from China without any appropriate measurements. Since then the PLA Navy has pursued three steps of developing its naval force: rely upon foreign technology and quality, re-engineering former Soviet Union’s weapons and systems, and create indigenous design and platform.

However, this process caused huge unexpected pains and problems to the PLA Navy and the problems still remain to be unresolved as major predicament to pursue its ambitious modernization process. These lessons learned from its cooperation with the Soviet Union led the Chinese leadership imposed at least precautions in adopting foreign technology and process to its navy transformation. It is main predicament for the Chinese navy to set up its new direction and goals of transformation and still remain rudimentary problems to cope with fundamental problems. The Chinese leadership is very cautious for carrying on its on-and-off aircraft carrier program and did not express certain strategy how to build and operate her.

The Chinese naval modernization seems to be very costly. It has gradually begun to produce visible results, but has been slow due to political and economic constraints. Many China specialists hold a pessimistic view on China’s long-term navy development, given its technological weakness, lack of resources and the uncertainties concerning political succession. Priority of the PLA Navy modernization is still regarded as low-level of allocation of the defense budget.<sup>47</sup> Many China watchers argued that if the PLA wanted to be a blue-water navy, high-speed and level economic should be maintained

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<sup>46</sup> Bernard D. Cole, *The Great Wall at Sea*, p. 140.

<sup>47</sup> James C. Mulvenon, Murray Scot Tanner, Michael S. Chase, David Frelinger, David C. Gompert, Martin C. Libicki, Kevin L. Pollpeter, *Chinese Responses to U.S. Military Transformation and Implications for the Department of Defense*, p. 20.

as the United States navy demonstrated during the recent naval operations.<sup>48</sup> Surprisingly, the PLA has still placed yet-to-be-decided priority of allocating the defense budgets. When Deng Xiaoping launched ambitious his “Four Modernization Plan”, military modernization placed the lowest priority and concurrently the PLAN has placed relatively “wait-and-see” priority to modernize its naval force and implement the force improvement plan. Even Chinese leadership would absolutely not approve PLAN requirement of replacing the old and obsolete assets, i.e., surface combatant, submarines and land-based aircraft in large numbers.

## COMMONALITIES AND DIFFERENCES BETWEEN TWO NATIONS

### *Commonalities as contextual cooperation between two navies*

Now, China and Korea returned maritime nations. Both nations have a strategic interest in oceanic trade, in view of their increasing dependence on foreign trade and energy sources, and their rapidly growing merchant marine. As their economic growth increased, China and Korea become to be maritime characteristic, rather continental power. There are ample reasons why they are to be maritime power *per se*: burgeoning seaborne trade, increased ashore infrastructure, hungry for natural resource to maintain economic development, so on. These conditions led them more often set up maritime-oriented national policy and strategy and modernize their naval forces respectively.

In this sense, the sea lines of communication(SLOC) security policy will be one of the common maritime issue for China and Korea. The SLOC security is increasingly important to China and Korea. Relying on foreign sources of energy will also pose strategic problems for China and Korea. China and Korea rely on tankers for almost all its crucial oil imports, while it annually imports millions of tons of grain by sea. Ships carry about 85 percent of China’s trade and 98 percent of Korea’s trade, and their sea route heavily lies in the vital SLOC passes through the strategic chokepoints.<sup>49</sup> For instance, more than three times as many ships pass through the Malacca Strait as pass through the Suez Canal, and more than five times as many as pass through the Panama Canal.

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<sup>48</sup> For this, excellent research will be Center for Naval Analyses’ monograph published in 1996.

See Christopher D. Yung, *People’s War at Sea: Chinese Naval Power in the Twenty-First Century*.

<sup>49</sup> John G. Fox, “Sea Change in Shipping,” *U.S. Naval Institute Proceedings*, May 2001, pp. 62–65.

As two nations' oversea trade heavily relied upon maritime setting of the region, China and Korea realized that the offshore national security concerns – Indian Ocean, Malacca Straits, the South China Sea, and the SLOC – are problems whose resolution will require the ability to prevail in a maritime environment. These are marked by several seas and straits: sea setting of the region divides East China Sea and South China Sea in North. Now they tuned their interests in more emphasizing Southbound characteristic and input another vertical expansion in securing their long-range high sea SLOC and ensuring their requirements on natural resources.

Due to their strong requirement to safeguard the high sea SLOC, two nations are willing to pay more attention for developing the so-called “Northern Sea” Route, ranged from Bering Straits in the West to Kara gate in the East in replace the Southern Sea Route where has been regarded as Southern entrance to Pacific Ocean. China is a nation to contribute its metrological and environmental survey and send icebreakers to explore new potential sea route of the Arctic and Korea is a leading nation to build various new technology-applied icebreakers and platforms of exploring Arctic's oil and gas developments in the Arctic.

### ***Implementing an ambitious naval modernization***

To begin China's naval modernization was far earlier than Korean navy's plan. It was very much true that the Chinese maritime strategy was not clearly articulated and it was preoccupied by Mao's “People's War” military strategy until the early 1980s. As soon as Deng Xiaoping implemented military modernization, Admiral *Liu Huaqing* assumed office as commander of the PLAN from 1982 to 1987 and his new maritime strategy was characterized as the “active offshore defense strategy.”<sup>50</sup> Two elements are crucial to an understanding of this strategy, namely the meanings of “active defense” and “offshore.” The first prescribes a model of future war fighting for the navy; and the second draws expansion of the geographic scope for naval operations.

Under the new naval strategy, the PLA Navy long-term goal involves the modernization of its existing static obsolete fleet, composed of multi-purposed surface combatants, more quite conventional and nuclear-powered submarines, amphibious and supporting assets and seaborne air defense operational capabilities. From then on the navy may

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<sup>50</sup> You Ji, *The Armed Force of China*, p. 165.

shift the priority from hardware deployment to technology improvement. The most recent assets to China's surface fleet are the *Sovremenny*-class and *Luyang-II* destroyers with the multidimensional air defense capabilities, and the formidable surface-to-surface/air weapons and systems.

The PLA Navy maintained a large submarine force with two-type new SSNs, designated the Type-093, and a new SSBN, designated the Type-094. Both will almost certainly rely on Russian design and engineering assistance. It is China watcher's argument that the PLA Navy will decide to purchase newly development weapons and platforms, i.e., *Yakhont* anti-ship missile, the *Amurs*, the *Lada* class-an air independent propulsion submarine, and aircraft carrier capable of operating fixed-wing aircraft, perhaps similar to Russian *Varyag*, a unit in the former Soviet's newest and largest classes of aircraft carriers equipped with a "ski jump" bow to facilitate airborne aircraft operations.

Since the Korean War, the ROK Navy has been steadily upgrading its naval forces. However, its achievement was not large scale of modernization due to its heavy reliance upon the United States navy. It was, however, a great turning point that Admiral *An Pyongtae*, the 20<sup>th</sup> Chief of Naval Operations of the ROKN, revealed the vision of building "*Daeyanghaekun*"("Ocean-going navy" in Korean)" for direction of the ROK Navy future in his inaugural address in 1995.<sup>51</sup> His new vision for new navy has been substantially proved by the Korean Destroyer Experimental(KDX) project known as a part of a plan to strengthen the surface combatant forces of the ROK Navy and other new programs. The KDX project has gone through three different programs: KDX- I for the *King Kwanggaeto the Great* class, KDX- II for *Chungmugong Yi Sunshin* class, and KDX-III for the *King Sejong the Great* class, equipped the Aegis combat system and the SPY-1D multi-function phased array radar, which are built to replace the obsolete and more than 60 years olden ex-US Navy destroyers<sup>52</sup>

For building balanced naval forces, the ROK Navy successfully acquired its first submarine, ROKS *Chang Bogo*(SS 061) from Germany in 1992 under the in-country production contract and the ROKS *Sohn Wonil*, the first KSS- II program known as type 214 AIP submarine under the Germany technical assistance, launched at the Hyundai Heavy Industry Shipyard in Ulsan to extend underwater operational capability.<sup>53</sup> In

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<sup>51</sup> [http://www.navy.mil.kr/about/oceannavy\\_5.jsp](http://www.navy.mil.kr/about/oceannavy_5.jsp). Retrieved March 4, 2007.

<sup>52</sup> Eric Wertheim, "World Navies in Review," *U.S. Naval Institute Proceedings*, March 2008, p. 18.

<sup>53</sup> <http://hq.navy.mil/npas/controller?domain=ytn&command=read&type...> Retrieved 9 June 2006.

addition, Lockheed P-3C Orion maritime patrol aircraft has replaced the aged S-2 Trackers since 1995. It was real heyday for the ROK Navy when the 14,000-ton amphibious landing ship, ROKS *Dokdo* (LPH 6111) was launched in 2004 remarked the high-readiness of being an ocean-going naval force in order to best meet the challenge of being the first at the scene of crisis.<sup>54</sup> Admiral Jung Ok-Keun, chief of naval operations, expressed strong confidence in plans to modernize its fleet into a powerful blue-water capability with robust mobility and operational range that can rapidly deploy to an area of conflict.<sup>55</sup>

For the two navies, modernization of its obsolete and outdated naval forces allocates on not the present AOR-driven district fleet, but newly-built multi-mission Task Fleet(TF) or Rapid Response Fleet(RRF) that action in the high sea have changed from being a part of a land war to being independent means to achieve strategic and campaign objectives. *Geoffrey Till*, one of the leading British experts and scholars of the maritime security, more often argued that the world navies faced what kind of the fleet they should be retained.<sup>56</sup> Since the two navies faced strategic view, budgetary limitations, foreign relations, and domestic political situation, all indicate that China and Korea dictate small amount of indigenous productions or foreign purchases, but not both in significant numbers. The two nations' navy recognized as leading navy to develop new-assigned fleet as the North Atlantic Organization(NATO) navies developed as rapid response fleet or multipurpose-oriented task force and similar to the US Navy-operated numbered task fleet of the world. In particular, the end of the Cold War led them continues to put its efforts to build a new fleet that will pay more attention to implement the true blue water naval operations. An enabled and balanced fleet is the significant end-state of their naval transformation and modernization.

It is just same juncture that the Chinese ambitious future acquisitions of new naval capability includes "yet-to-be-decided" aircraft carrier conclude the necessity of having an independent combating task force in conducting more capable, high-readiness and balanced naval force. Even through none of the reports of the PLA Navy aircraft carrier acquisition have been confirmed, there are hard evidences that the aircraft carrier construction that either undergoing or planned for the immediate future will play

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<sup>54</sup> <http://hq.navy.mil/navyintroduce/about/futureofthenavy/future.html>, Retrieved 14 August, 2008.

<sup>55</sup> Jung Sung-ki, "S. Korea Navy To Expand Blue-Water Ops," *Defense News*, October 20, 2008, p. 16.

<sup>56</sup> See Geoffrey Till, *The Development of British Naval Thinking* (London: Routledge, 2006), Introduction.

crucial role in formulating its own task fleet. Yet the naval leadership has never wavered in its determination to build aircraft carriers. Admiral *Liu Huaqing* once said with a lot of passion about his carrier dream as part of a special PLA Navy construction program designated the “998 Plan.”<sup>57</sup> By the same token, in 2001, then President *Kim Daejung* announced a plan for building up the *Jeolrakgidonghamdae* in Korean – the term of “Strategic Maneuver Fleet(*sic*)” in English – which is to be termed as either task fleet that will contribute for a quite extended role and mission.<sup>58</sup> For China and Korea, new fleet will be responsible for contingencies and conflicts occurred beyond AOR because of multi-faceted non-traditional threats.<sup>59</sup>

### *Differences as “potential conflicts”*

There are some differences how two nations overlook the issues of international regime and historical legacies. First, China still has a great suspicious perception of establishing its relationship with external actors. That gave the Chinese leadership misunderstand what the realism of international politics is to be applied, i.e., transition of power, multilateral institutions and norms. For instance, China has understood the UNCLOS in favors of its predominant influences on regional order. The PRC has more often expressed very pessimistic views on the regional and world security. From Chinese point of view, the regional and world situation is stable, but it is dangerous.

The Chinese leaders want to maintain more stable and peaceful regional and world situations in order to continue to foster its skyscraping economic growth and development. It is, however, a “concurrent fact” that they are concerned about the Chinese weak position on economic interaction with other major powers and China will be another victim of rearranging of the developed nations’ world order. More seriously, China has been preoccupied by its historical legacy in line with the so-called “Middle Kingdom Syndrome.” China should be core power and its peripheries are to justify the territorial claims, particularly on East China Sea and South China Sea, and so on. Even China provided its legitimate claim on South China Sea against relative claims from Philippines, Vietnam and Japan.

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<sup>57</sup> Thomas Hirschfeld, “China’s Aircraft Carrier Program: A Virtual Dragonfly?” *Korean Journal of Defense Analysis*, vol. 10, no. 1 (Summer 1998), pp. 141–54. From Cole’s 108. Footnote. 72.

<sup>58</sup> <http://www.3.yonsei.ac.kr:8888/kdlibrary/historyData/researchData/viewNew.asp?pkid=30009&searchValue=&sYear=2001&sMonth=03&sDay=01&sYear=2000&eMonth=04&eDay=17>. Retrieved March 12, 2007.

<sup>59</sup> Eric Wertheim, “World Navies in Review,” p. 18 & The Ministry of Defense, *White Paper 2006* (Seoul : Ministry of Defense, 2006), p. 38.

Second, China prefers bilateral basis to multilateral basis to resolve disputes with its neighboring nations, in particular maritime territorial disputes. In this regard, China has quite different views of the UNCLOS to define maritime boundary issue. China opposed the UNCLOS-suggested multilateral method of delineating contested EEZ and CS with Korea and Japan. China has claimed by applying equidistance criteria, instead favoring bilateral negotiations by the parties concerned. It was official principle that all boundary disputes would be settled through bilateral considerations, not by reference to the international tribunals recommended by UNCLOS. Just the same, China attempted to qualify the UNCLOS provision for foreign warships having the right of innocent passage through its territorial water.

Beijing reaffirmed its sovereignty all the islands it had claimed in its 1992 “Law on the Territorial Sea and the Contiguous Zone.” These include the disputes “Taiwan and all islands appertaining thereto,” as well as the *Penghu*, *Dongsa*, *Diaoyuta*(Senkaku), *Xisha*(Paracel), *Nansha*(Spratly), and other South China Sea islands. These claims, by themselves, do not establish sovereignty under the modern usage, but China consistently phrases its claims in absolute terms. For maritime boundary between China and Korea, Beijing uses “straight baselines” to demarcate its territorial claims along all of coastline, a method contrary to the 1982 UNCLOS. China and Korea have attempted to settle their contested border in a treaty signed various years since the 1980s, but still dispute their maritime boundary in the West Sea and South Sea of the Korean peninsula.

Fisheries are another vital difference between China and Korea. China has had the largest fisheries industry in the world since 1990, with 41.22 million tons harvested in 1999.<sup>60</sup> The West Sea or Yellow Sea in Chinese had been rich in this resource, but for the time being, is in danger of being “fished out.” Two nations try to enforce a fish conservation program through a large fleet of “fishing patrol ships” under agreement between two nations’ Agriculture Ministries. However, China’s efforts to institute this program have suffered from a lack of control of its fishery industry and cooperation with surrounding nations and its own coastal provinces. Now the number of the Chinese illegal fishing boats in the West Sea counted much more than Korean fishing boats. Japan is also addressing the issue of conserving East China Sea fish stocks, but with little success to date.

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<sup>60</sup> Bernard D. Cole, *The Great Wall at Sea*, p. 38.

Third, China may have much serious complex internal problems than its neighbors. China has emphasized on national territorial integration, social-fabric ethnic unite and balanced economic parity among sporadic provinces of the mainland China. Taiwan issue has been regarded as the most sensitive national security issue that may influence and disrupt internal unite and integration.<sup>61</sup> Tibet ethnic rally is also the most sensitive agenda of threatening China's leadership's concern.

Just same situation, Korea may not match its willingness to reunite national integration and unit just the same desire as the Chinese wants to do to Taiwan. Even though two nations attempted to enhance their military strength to accomplish their national integration and unit, they prefer economic power to military power to do this object. Current economic interaction between China and Taiwan would help Korea to resolve North Korean nuclear issue and to maintain more stable internal situation than ever before. Taiwan for China would not be political issue, but economic issue. North Korea for Korea will be political issue.

## LIKELY SCENARIOS FOR CONFRONTATION AND COOPERATION BETWEEN TWO NAVIES

### *Scenario I : North Korea crisis*

The worst scenario of creating potential confrontation between China and Korea is North Korea crisis. The North Korean regime survival has placed in China's top security agenda. With the collapse of the former the "USSR-China-North Korea" triangular relationship, Chinese view on the North Korean issue is more dominant on Chinese national security. From the Chinese point of view, although North Korea is a nation with failed Leninist economic system and rigid Marxist political ideology to develop its own power to make itself a key player, she would have more room to maneuver its brinkmanship tactics in playing one against others.<sup>62</sup>

Under the failure of its economic and political system, however, North Korea has

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<sup>61</sup> See Murray Scot Tanner, *Chinese Economic Coercion Against Taiwan* (Santa Monica: RAND National Defense Research Institute, 2007)

<sup>62</sup> Andrew Scobell, "Beijing's Headache Over Kim Jongil," *Far Eastern Economic Review*, July/August 2007, pp. 35-38.



implemented another brinkmanship tactics in coping with sudden regime collapse.<sup>63</sup> It has been remarked by development nuclear capability, and this strategy has been criticized by its neighbors, included China itself. Whatever its survival strategies will be succeeded, the North Korean regime crisis is a main concern for those who are eager to have quite similar perception of North Korea's regime survival: North Korea should be stable and nation itself *per se*.

China needs to more peaceful security environment around homeland of China than ever before. If North Korea is process of the leadership crisis due to its internal power struggle, it is not only security issue between the two nations, but also regional security agenda because of its multinational concern among the major powers included the Republic of Korea. For China, Korean peninsula has been regarded as the "vital" or "main" the Chinese national security.

What the Chinese concerns about its national security in time of North Korean regime crisis is what kind of role of the United States force in Korea(USFK) apply for inter-Korean disputes in favor of the United States' will. Establishing of the pro-Western regime soon after the sudden collapse of the North Korean regime in the either North Korea or unified Korea would not be good situation for China. Meanwhile, this is the very lowest possibility on this scenario that the U.S. will execute military intervention of the Korean affairs unless the Chinese military is likely to conduct its military operations on the inter-Korean conflicts as the Chinese army did during the Korean War.

First, China's alliance with North Korea has been known as party-to-party relationship, not military-to-military relationship. Two nations signed on the mutual military aid and support agreement reflects the Chinese concern about the third party's military intervention on the North Korea crisis.

Second is a value of North Korea's geostrategic value for China. According to dramatic geopolitical changes of Northeast Asia, the North Korean value for China's national security remained relatively high priority on the Chinese national security. Military-to-

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<sup>63</sup> In the early-September North Korean leader *Kim Jongil* was not in real attendance at official occasions in North Korea and it caused his ability to manage the regime due to his health problem. In late September, North Korea has insisted to break the agreement at the six-party talk removing equipment from storage near *Yongbyon* while breaking US seals on other items in what may be preparatory moves to reassembly the nuclear reactor. The United States lifted North Korea from terrorism blacklist in October 11, 2008.

military interaction between China and North Korea has focused on land security-driven issue because of their border disputes. Moreover, due to North Korea's economic failure and stagnation, there have been illegal cross-boarders from North Korea at sea. The agreement between China and North Korea appears to be nearly-dead status due to changes of the geopolitical value of North Korea. It is Chinese military disposition that the CMC decide to deploy its heavily-equipped ground forces to the Northeast Military Region aimed at mainly Russia. <Table 10> shows Chinese Military Region and its neighbors.

<Table 10: Chinese Military Region and Navy Fleet's Force>

MR	Nations covered	Group Armies	Navy Fleet	Naval Force
Beijing	Russia, Korea, Monglia	3	North Sea Fleet	4 x SSBN 22 x SS 12 x DDG 9 x FFG 7 x Amphi. ships 10 x PGMs
Shenyang		3		
Jinan		3		
Nanjing	Japan, 7th Fleet(USN)	3	East Sea Fleet	1 x SSBN 32 x SS 17 x DDG 36 x FFG
Guangzhou	ASEAN	3	South Sea Fleet	47 x Amphi. ships 35 x PGMs
Chengdu	ASEAN, India Nepal, Bhutan	2	N/A	N/A
Lanzhou	India, Pakistan, Russia Central Asian Nations	2		

Source: James C. Mulvenon and Andrew N. D. Yang, ed., *Conference proceedings, The People's Liberation Army as Organization, Reference Volume v 1.0* (Santa Monica, CA: RAND National Security Research Division, 2002), pp. 458-500 & Office of the Secretary of Defense, *Annual Report to Congress: Military Power of the People's Republic of China 2008* (Washington, D.C.: Department of Defense, 2008), p. 54.

In the maritime term, there seems to be very little possibility of military interactions

between the Chinese navy and North Korean navy focused on West Sea of the Korean peninsula. Humanitarian assistance operation in time of the North Korean contingency will be a feasible naval interaction between the PLA Navy and the ROK Navy, which will be focused on the West Sea of the Korean peninsula.<sup>64</sup> When the North Korean regime is collapse and fall into the chaos, huge refugees from North Korea whose intention for escaping from North Korean regime and settle down either China or Korea go through not land, but sea. The West Sea in Korean surrounding the Korean peninsula will be critical maritime domain included illegal fisheries, illicit immigration and presumably drug trafficking activities from China to Korea and Japan.

China has expressed very little interests in the West Sea along the mainland China in peace. It should be noted that the North Sea Fleet has not been on the top of the list of allocating its advanced and sophisticated naval forces in the last ten years.<sup>65</sup> In contrast, the reinforcements of the East Sea Fleet and South Sea Fleet have stepped up since the 1980s, when the territorial disputes in the *Spratly* Islands and the *Diaoyutai* Islands intensified.<sup>66</sup> The North Sea Fleet was established only at the beginning of the 1960s to deter the Soviet strategic threats that was the last naval fleet after the East Sea Fleet and South Sea Fleet. The Chinese North Sea Fleet has conducted very little naval interaction with the ROK Navy to monitor and patrol various transnational crime activities in the confined sea area.

Otherwise, in time of North Korea contingency, China and Korea should count on close maritime coordination to deter refugee crisis and transnational crime occurred at sea ranging from intimidation to outright maritime domain. It is recent that the two navies announced to find out the possibility of installing hot-line channel between the 2<sup>nd</sup> Fleet of the ROK Navy and the North Sea Fleet of the PLA Navy. In essence, it is fair to say that China's weak naval cooperation with North Korea and low possibility of the United States' intervention the inter-Koreans conflicts contribute to develop close naval cooperation between two navies in time of the Korean peninsula crisis.

However, there will be different story if Korean navy conduct its mass expeditionary operation to attack the flank of the Korean peninsula with combined operational doctrine

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<sup>64</sup> Humanitarian issue from North Korea caused international blames to violate humanitarian right due to mismanagement of the cross-board control between China and North Korea in land.

<sup>65</sup> This can be seen clearly from the huge amount of allocating its new acquisition of advanced surface combatants to three geographic fleets.

<sup>66</sup> Richard E. Farrell, "Is the PLA Navy a Legitimate Threat?" *U.S. Naval Institute Proceedings*, December 2003, pp. 42-43.

of ROK-US military alliance. The Chinese naval strategist often insisted that anti-access theory should be one that the PLA Navy has to exercise its certain limited but effective capability to disrupt the enemy's freedom of action in the designated sea area. The PLA Navy argued that anti-access operation should be carried out by underwater assets. The North Sea Fleet possessed various classes of new conventional and nuclear-powered submarines. In order to deter Korea's naval operation near the littoral area close to North Korea's *Pyongyang*, the Chinese conventional submarines appear to be deployed in the West Sea and *Bohai* Sea in advance of the anti-access operation. It is the fact that the West Sea is not proper theater to operate nuclear submarines because of its shallow depth and underwater environment. In this sense, China will deploy its land-based aircraft to demonstrate its desire that Korea has to not cross beyond what level of the Chinese government wants to assign. Whatever the PLA Navy takes its anti-access operation has to hurt Korean special naval task force to carry out mission involved large-scaled amphibious operation and its land attacks with extended naval gunfire support operation. It is conceivable that the *Kilo*-class submarines, *Song*-class and *Yuan*-class submarines will meet the ROK Navy surface combatants ASW operation. China possessed more underwater assets than other regional nations.

### *Scenario II: Taiwan crisis as the second Sino-US hot war in the 21<sup>st</sup> century*<sup>67</sup>

Taiwan is obviously China's most national security issue. Taiwan crisis may occur through sea, crucially Taiwan straits ranging from 200 nautical miles to 81 nautical miles. For China, true threat against China's internal security is Taiwan's movement of proclaiming unilateral independent nation-state, internal insurgency caused by dissents and anti-China activities. These movements are nothing but outright contradiction of the Chinese territorial integration. China has voiced a visceral fear that Taiwan's independence could trigger off a "domino effect" of national disunity – with Taiwan's loss sparking independence movements among China's Muslims, Tibetans, or even Mongols or Koreans. Whether the Chinese leadership is able to exercise its diplomacy and military meanings in the successful territorial integration process entirely relies on Taipei's willingness of acknowledging *status quo ante bellum*.

As long as Taiwan is eager to foster its burgeoning economic interaction with mainland China, China will not pursue the use of military to occupy Taiwan.<sup>68</sup> In addition, there

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<sup>67</sup> The first Sino-US hot war was the Korean war, 1950–53.

<sup>68</sup> See James C. Mulvenon, Murray Scot Tanner, Michael S. Chase, David Frelinger, David C.

will be other reasons for this. It is quite common that the PLA Navy does not possess the forces in either forces or operational capability to conduct mass military campaign against Taiwan other than those immediately off its coast.<sup>69</sup> If the Chinese armed force attempts to recover Taiwan by using military mean and instrument, China needs 3-4 times more military forces than Taiwan.<sup>70</sup> In addition, China is not likely to devote the massive amount of defense budget necessary to modernize its naval force in terms of quantity and quality because its domestic military and political concerns limit available resources. <Table 11> demonstrate Taiwan Strait naval force disposition between China and Taiwan.

<Table 11: Taiwan Strait Naval Force Disposition between China and Taiwan>

China(2007)		Taiwan(2007)
Assets	East and South Sea Fleets	Total
Destroyers	17	4
Frigates	36	22
Tank Landing Ships	24	12
Medium Landing Ships	23	4
Diesel Attack Submarines	32	4
Nuclear Attack Submarines	1	0
Coastal Patrol (Missile)	35	51

Office of the Secretary of Defense, *Annual Report to Congress: Military Power of the People's Republic of China 2008* (Washington, D.C.: Department of Defense, 2008), p. 54.

Even though Beijing appeared to refuse to renounce the possible use of force, China would not discard its military option in using naval forces. The PLA Navy has been forced to work hard to develop efficient and effective operations for employing naval force against Taiwan. The PLA Navy military operation about Taiwan seems to be focusing on three alternative naval operations: amphibious assault, blockade by mining, and deterrent strike using ballistic missiles that can be summed as a barrier strategy.<sup>71</sup> These options aiming at Taiwan are difficult, complex and outdated naval operations to carry out successfully, requiring the attacker not merely to match the defender's forces,

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Gompert, Martin C. Libicki, Kevin L. Pollpeter, *Chinese Responses to U.S. Military Transformation and Implications for the Department of Defense*.

<sup>69</sup> Rear Admiral Michael McDevitt, "Where is China's Navy headed?" *U.S. Naval Institute Proceedings*, May 2001, pp. 58-61.

<sup>70</sup> Bernard D. Cole, *The Great Wall at Sea*, p. 184.

<sup>71</sup> Andrew S. Erickson, Lyle J. Goldstein, William S. Murray, and Andrew R. Wilson, *China's Future Nuclear Submarine Forces* (Annapolis, Maryland: Naval Institute Press, 2007), 97.

but to outnumber them by more than 3 times ratio.<sup>72</sup> In addition, these will also cause the disruption of the regional SLOC, violating international law if China appears to conduct mine laying operation to blockade Taiwan's major ports and coastal. From Chinese point of view, mines and missiles are the ultimate cost-effective naval tools. Any mines laid by the PLA Navy for blockading Taiwan's ports and sea routes are difficult to sweep and destroy them, and remaining mines will cause for hampering the SLOC connected between Southeast Asia to Northeast Asia.<sup>73</sup>

Likewise, last option is not favor for China. The Chinese navy is able to conducts medium/long ballistic missiles to disrupt Taiwan's internal stability. The Chinese navy has its various-derivation indigenous cruise missiles included *Shang You-1A*(SY-1A) and *Shang You-2*(SY-2) modified versions of the Soviet built SS-N-2 Styx and French-built Exocet missile. All missiles are able to reach Taiwan launched from surface combatants, submarines, and aircraft. Distance between mainland China and Taiwan covers from 200 nautical miles in maximum to 81 nautical miles in minimum. *Ju Lang-1*(JL-1) intermediate-range ballistic missiles and *Ju Lang-2* capable of carrying multiple, independently targetable nuclear warheads are not suitable to apply to its operation to Taiwan due to long-ranged features.

The United States intervention on Taiwan crisis is main concerns for China. Even though the United States inclined to express explicit intervention of the so-called "Taiwan crisis" to ensure the regional security and peace with respect to "One China principle" policy, the Chinese leaders acknowledge that the U.S. 7<sup>th</sup> fleet remains the determinant factor in East Asian maritime crises. In this regard, rebirth of Beijing's strategic concerns about the United States' intervention on Taiwan crisis is the worst scenario.

Washington's intentions would take into account its military relation with traditional allies, Japan and Korea, especially with respect to the implications of its bilateral defense pact, i.e., the Japanese 1998 security guidelines as they may apply to Taiwan. Japan looms very large on China's increased concerns on Taiwan issue, China suspects the United States' alliance with Japan that ancient disputes and malice combined with

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<sup>72</sup> You Ji, *The Armed Forces of China*, pp. 211-216.

<sup>73</sup> Relatively low-cost mines have been responsible for massively disproportionate damage and repair costs to three U.S. navy warships in the 1990-1991 Persian Gulf War. Using mines cost from \$ 1,500 to \$ 10,000 attacked the U.S. navy ships and damaged repair cost from \$3.5 million to 96 million. See Nick Brown, "What lies beneath," *Jane's Navy International*, June 2003, p. 15.

World War II grievances and suspicion of future Japanese aggression created an edgy relationship. It is inherently a maritime cooperation, given the seas that lie between the two nations as a natural barrier to any but seaborne or airborne interaction. If Tokyo and Washington interpret those guidelines' reference to "water surrounding Japan" as including Taiwan, China would face a much more complicated situation in the Taiwan straits crisis.<sup>74</sup>

Just the same, China is very much suspecting Korea's alliance with the United States. Its bitter experiences during both Korean War and Vietnam War led the Chinese leaders face injustice and unfair treatment on the Korean affairs. More seriously the Chinese government is concerned about that the true role of the USFK remains not a static military force deployed in Korea only deterring the North Korean attack, but agile military tool that the United States government can freely dispatch it to regional and global contingencies, not to mention on the Korean peninsula security. China's fear of the USFK adaptation of concept of "strategic flexibility" was heightened in June 2003, when the Pentagon proclaimed that the USFK is able to divert into non-Korean theater to rapidly response regional or global contingencies in the pretext of strategic flexibility. From the Chinese standing point of view, the change of operational concept of the USFK would make a good excuse for the United States to intervene the Taiwan crisis with sending its military force in Korea.

The U.S. military force stationed in Korea and Japan appears to be deployed by sealift operations of which role is assigned to both the 7<sup>th</sup> fleet's in Yokosuka naval base in Japan and the Republic of Korea navy's new sealift capability. The Korean navy recently enhanced its sealift capabilities by acquisition of its indigenous largest transport ship, ROK Ship *Dokdo* and "yet-to-be-determined" new LST-class amphibious ship program. Even though this has been proved as an unlikely-happened scenario by naval specialists, enhancement of the ROK Navy sealift capability would be major concern.

More seriously, China is also concerned about the possibility of possible trilateral naval coordination between the United States navy, Korean navy and Japanese Maritime Self-defense Force in line with Taiwan crisis. Its feasibility of formulation has been discussed through series academic naval forum and seminars those were held in the

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<sup>74</sup> Bernard D. Cole, *The Great Wall at Sea*, p. 170.

two nations.<sup>75</sup> The 7<sup>th</sup> fleet has normally deployed to Taiwan straits to de-escalate the tense between China and Taiwan. China has observed many occasions that the USN 7<sup>th</sup> fleet has deployed in advance in the Taiwan straits, 1950–53 Korean War, Taiwan crises in 1953 and 1956, recently 1995 Taiwan election and so on. It was increased trend that the 3<sup>rd</sup> fleet of the ROK Navy conducted its bilateral naval exercise with the JMSDF and the 7<sup>th</sup> fleet of the USN co-hosting for responsibility of protecting the SLOC and conducting monitor and patrol against pirate and illegal activities.

In contrast, the East Sea Fleet of the Chinese navy has planning responsibility for contingency scenario involving Taiwan and the East China Sea tasked with executing robust and coercive naval operations. Since Taiwan's rapid naval modernization has accelerated and the threat from Russia has faded in the two decades, there has been a readjustment of the PLA Naval force allocation between the North Sea Fleet and East Sea Fleet. China recently deployed some of large and modern surface combatants to North Sea Fleet. Despite of readjustment, the fleet's principal combat strength still is in its large number of speed boat of small sizes because this is in contrast to the US 7<sup>th</sup> fleet, whose potential enemy is the PLA Navy, was heavy tasked with formidable nuclear-powered aircraft carrier, Aegis air-defense cruiser and destroyer as stakeholder of balancing of power.

Neither situation would be a comfortable scenario for China. Should Taiwan contingency be occurred, China may conduct very limited naval operation. For the economic reasons, not political purpose, any regional maritime security instability would not be welcomed because regional actors relied on the SLOC security and wanted to ensure concurrent commitment of freedom of navigation at high sea. China and Korea are not able to escape this.

### *Scenario III: China's unilateral "Fait accompli" strategy in the South/East China Sea*

If Taiwan is Beijing's most serious national security agenda, next in importance are its territorial right and sovereignty that disputes with its neighboring nations in South China Sea and East China Sea. Ironically, China's maritime interests in these seas are subtly contradictory. Given the long argument of claiming territorial right and sovereignty on South/East China Sea, many unexpected factors exist that may torpedo

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<sup>75</sup> Suk-joon Yoon, "Missions and Operations: Trilateral Naval Cooperation among Korea-Japan-United States," *The Korean Journal of Defense Analysis*, Winter 1999, p. 215–238.



its claims.

First, China's maritime territorial claim in the Spratly Islands is tough and firm. China has insisted on its territorial right and sovereignty based on historical evidences. Beijing's straightforward and upright claims stem from China's increasing dependence on offshore maritime resources; China's maritime economic stake is large and growing. As petroleum is China's preeminent offshore economic interest of these claims, the Spratly Islands are China's only contested area of known energy reserves. In February 1992 the Chinese passed the "Law of the Territorial Sea and Contiguous Zones" claimed for China essentially all of the South China Sea, ocean as well as land areas included Gulf of Tonkin, Paracel Islands, Spratly Islands, perhaps Northern part of the Natuna Islands.

In order to this, China has implemented its "*fait accompli*" strategy to build solid evidences and records. For instance, China conducted its unilateral naval operation to action, occupy and defend disputable territories in the South China Sea and East China Sea on keeping to itself-defined sovereignty, Paracel Islands in 1984 and 1988, Spratly Islands until 1998 and the *Diaoyutai* Islands in various years. This combination of extreme sensitivity to maritime sovereignty issues and possible susceptibility to offshore economic value should instigate in Beijing a drive to ensure that the PLA Navy is fully capable of defending China's interests.

It is arguable that China's aggressive stance in the South China Sea is being driven by the PLA Navy, over the objections of the foreign ministry.<sup>76</sup> The greater the value placed on maritime interests such as the Spratly Islands and the *Diaoyutai* Islands, the greater the PLA Navy potential clout in PLA budget competition and the greater the willingness of the Beijing communist leadership to authorize naval modernization and growth. Since then, the Chinese navy increased its presence in the South China Sea in increased its assets of the South Sea Fleet and East Sea Fleet.

Second, China exercises its flexible attitude on the territorial disputes of the South China Sea. While China is maintaining a rigid position on the sovereignty of the islands, it is willing to discuss, preferably bilaterally, peripheral issues of territorial usage. As far as its energy security is concerned, this flexibility reflected in its proposal to shelve the issue of sovereignty for the time being.

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<sup>76</sup> Bernard D. Cole, *The Great Wall at Sea*, p. 46.

First reason is China's interests in safeguarding its SLOC. Most of the Chinese SLOC ranging from Malacca Straits to East Asia must pass through or by the South China Sea. Disruption of this SLOC that China relied upon its long-ranged resource import and good make of the Chinese labor-intensive industries in mainland China will be the worst scenario. Disruption of the SLOC between Malacca Straits to East China Sea is not good for China.

Second reason is the ASEAN's strong reaction against the Chinese claim in South China Sea. The Chinese coercion actions to its claim in South China Sea reflects the ASEAN's united reactions with regard to their respective claims that are regarded by the Chinese leadership as quite unexpected result. It was common until the late of 1980s that the ASEAN members would not muster enough reaction for the Chinese unilateral activities to present Beijing with a united front.

Since the Chinese surprising occupation in the mischief reef in 1988 that also claimed by Philippines, the ASEAN has mustered united front against the Chinese unexpected occupation and defending the part of South China Sea territorial areas. In 1988 when the Chinese warship occupied the mischief reef in the pretext of protecting their fishing boats for safe sanctuary due to bad weather situation, the ASEAN's multinational opposition probably surprised the Chinese and caused them to slow their unilateral military action to the South China Sea. China may well have "cooled" the situation in the South China Sea to focus on the higher priority concerns about other issues.

Moreover, these Chinese attitudes to disputed territorial claims in the South China Sea were a prime reason for its neighboring nations' increasingly military alliance with the United States and military modernization. It was Philippines' subtle decision for its military modernization program and rehabilitated its traditional military alliance with the United States. Since 1995 China expressed hash attitude to Philippines in the Spratly Islands led Manila ratify the Visiting Forces Agreement(VFA) with the United States in 1999, which facilitated renewed of military exercises between two nations.<sup>77</sup>

Third reason is the possibility of intervening of the United States and luring pressure from other neighboring nations. In the early period, the Spratly disputes do not concern the United States at all, and it has no reason to interfere. However, since 1988 the U.S.

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<sup>77</sup> Bernard D. Cole, *The Great Wall at Sea*, p. 43.

has undoubtedly opposed a further drastic Chinese action in the Spratly. American sympathies will be with other claimants, including Vietnam, if China repeats its 1988 initiative.<sup>78</sup> Moreover, China is under diplomatic pressure from the United States and some of its Asian neighbors, Singapore, to abort the claim. Japan, for instance, has particularly linked its soft loans to China to its wish that China not cause any conflicts with other claimers.

It is good reason why China's claim on the *Diaoyutai* Islands is stronger than its claim on the Spratly Islands. The East China Sea is a newer resource of petroleum products for China, especially natural gas.<sup>79</sup> China claims the *Diaoyutai*, a group of five small islands and three rocky outcroppings lying 90 nautical miles northeast of Taiwan and 220 nautical miles west-southwest of Okinawa, also claimed by Japan as the *Senkaku* Islands. The Chinese incursions seem to be increasing in 2000, and this raises the potential for a confrontation between one of the Chinese naval patrol ships and a Japanese coast guard ships or patrol plane, which routinely respond to them.

Either firm stance or flexible attitude on the Spratly Islands and *Diaoyutai* Islands would be a comfortable option for the PLA Navy. The PLA Navy may be loser if the Chinese navy's tough posture is implementing to its neighboring countries to use its military means to retain its traditional regional hegemonic territorial right and sovereignty in the disputable maritime areas. If doing so, China's neighbors pose its pessimistic view of resorting for diplomacy mechanism in resolving East and South China Sea territorial disputes. It is great concerns of its neighbors that the PLA Navy outnumbered its neighbors' naval forces.

For peace, stability and prosperity in China, there would be strong requirement for the PLA Navy to make every effort to maintain more peaceful maritime security environment in the region. This may be another mission for the PLA Navy. Without such an effort on the PLA Navy part of the missions, the future of China does not look good and stable. Then the PLA Navy considered that its naval operational concept still remains far less capable of protecting its territorial interests and claims on the South China Sea and East China Sea. For instance, the PLA Navy is focusing on its effort to soothe frustrating series naval operations in safeguarding its maritime interests and the

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<sup>78</sup> You Ji, *The Armed Forces of China*, p. 260.

<sup>79</sup> Discoveries indicate reserves of approximately 150 billion cubic meters, which are already providing the primary energy source for Shanghai and major industrialized cities in Zhejiang province. Bernard D. Cole, *The Great Wall at Sea*, p. 58.

SLOC.

Moreover, with no visible external enemies in sight, the PLA Navy may be well aware of understanding how much serious its military action in disputable sea for its neighboring countries, mainly Southeast Asian countries. The end of the Cold War led the PLA Navy speed up its naval build-up that appears to be one of the good excuses for its rivalries' implementing of naval force improvement program. The Chinese naval modernization in terms of its production of new indigenous ships, submarines and aircraft and quick acquisition of advanced and sophisticated weapon and system roots a naval arms race in the region.

As China's economic ambitions to take back its traditional maritime influence are growing alarming to its neighbors, the PLA Navy appears to not initiate a unilateral military option. It is good indication that recently the PLA Navy is eager to ease tension not dispatching naval warship to occupy and unilaterally occupying disputes islands. Rather, the Chinese navy is sending its survey and research ships into the disputed area around the South China Sea.

Korea is allocating a significant portion of its oversea maritime trade to South China Sea and East China Sea where are medium sea route from Malacca Straits to the Korean peninsula. With regard to this, Korea has great maritime security interests to ensure the SLOC through South China Sea and East China Sea, but did not maintain naval presence in disputable seas. This is probably part of a deliberate Korean maritime policy similar to the Freedom of Navigation program, under which commercial ships deliberately transit seas claimed as sovereign by nations. This is major reason why Korea is not able to dispatch its naval force to protect its sea-borne commercial fleet and safeguard the freedom of navigation in the South China Sea in time of maritime contingency. Even though two navies in China and Korea are eager to enhance their SLOC operational capabilities, they possesses little ability to defend SLOC in the west of Malacca or in other blue water areas, and there is very little evidence that Beijing and Seoul are moving significantly to improve this capability. Hence, the naval cooperation for the contingency in the region marks two nations' contingency planning the protection of its oversea trading and safeguarding its high-sea SLOC near the South China Sea where located in international waters being defended by the United States naval forces.

*Scenario IV: China's maritime interests on the sea surrounding the Korean peninsula*

Having concerned about the maritime issues between China and Korea, there are little certain maritime issues, i.e., unilateral *fait accompli* action on the territorial disputes, much forefront of current maritime security concerns, maritime delineation disagreements includes continental shelf claims, Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ) boundaries and other offshore issues between two nations. Many emerging maritime security concerns between them include piracy, illegal fishing, pollution from oil spills, safety of the SLOC and exploitation of other offshore resources and illegal immigration are essentially maritime issues.

Should some of confrontation at sea around the Korean peninsula be happened, it is much easier and simpler issues than one of the South/East China Sea. The feasible confrontation between China and Korea at sea is much simpler than China's interests in the South/East China Sea. For instance, ownership of the disputed continental shelf would first be discussed possibly within the UNCLOS framework for settling incoming disputes between two nations. There are legally differences between two nations on the maritime issues. For instance, Korea argues that the two nations' overlapping EEZs should be divided midway between China and Korea, while Beijing's position is that the boundary lies to the east of the *Tung tao* Island. Fortunately, two nations determined to prevent this dispute from erupting into crisis, especially in view of the disruptive incidents on the continental shelf, and no incidental occurrences to present by unilateral actions from either military or non-military.

In addition, there are few hot focal points in the certain maritime disputable areas between China and Korea. They have various maritime boundary disputes, focusing on the West Sea and East China Sea in line with how to define continental shelf. These potentially dangerous situations are kept in check by the fact that meaningful oil and gas reserves have not been found. However, petroleum issues between focal points are incipient, as proven oil reserves to date lie well within disputable continental shelf, in the West Sea and the *Bohai* Sea. For this, oil is a hot issue to cause potential confrontation between the two nations. However, oil has not discovered in the immediate vicinity of the continental shelf between China and Korea. Even though the large deposits elsewhere on the East China Sea continental shelf make discoveries likely, either nation inclines to mention maritime right and sovereignty in the dispute areas because considered the analysis of the semi-closed scope and depth of maritime geography along the Korean peninsula.

Fishery disputes are another troublesome issue, although China has been negotiating with Korea to arrive at an equitable division of the area's biological resources. China was a party to fishing disputes for many years, involving North Korea and ROK. The West Sea was known as nearly resources extinguished sea area due to ecological situation and "too-much-fishery." In the West Sea in Korean, illegal Chinese fishing boats subtly operated their "nothing but all fishery business" along the demarcation line have been negotiated between two Koreas, which accidental naval clashes between two Koreas in the controversial North Limit Line(NLL) that were more often occurred by illegal the Chinese fishing fleet. Some of fishing disputes between China and Korea have threatened to turn into a "cod war" reminiscent of that between Iceland and Great Britain in the 1970s.

Negotiation so far has established at least temporary measures for resolving the fishery dispute, but yet reached finally satisfied measures and resolutions between China and Korea. The Chinese illegal fisheries over the West Sea and South Sea of the Korean peninsula would be the most serious single cause of naval clash between two nations in the foreseeable future.

None of maritime issues between China and Korea have so far directly involved naval forces of the two navies. There has not been decisive fleet-level sea battle between China and Korea that they mobilized their naval force respectively to counter the threat from the sea. Two nations had experienced limited naval cooperation between them throughout history. Across the West Sea are their traditional foes: Japan and Russia. In their modern history, whenever the defense of the West Sea and *Bohai* Sea were failed, the fall of their capital, Seoul and Beijing, soon imminent and followed.<sup>80</sup> For this reason, a number of sea battles were fought in the West Sea and the *Bohai* Sea. For instance, Sino-Japanese sea battle of the *Yalu* River in 1894 followed the declining of China's influence on the Korean peninsula and sea battle of the West Sea and Tsushima Straits between Japanese navy and Russian navy in 1904 and 1905 respectively demonstrated the cornerstone of the rise of Japan.

Considered the analysis of the semi-closed scope and depth of maritime geography along the West Sea and *Bohai* Sea, two nations appear to need an ambitious blue water

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<sup>80</sup> The Yellow Sea and *Bohai* Sea are the oceanic gateways to the nation's capital, Seoul and Beijing. It is only more than 100 kilometers away from the coastal.

navy capability, but brown water navy capability. It is not surprising, therefore, that two nations' naval modernization programs have not been affected by these disputes between China and Korea at sea surrounding the Korean peninsula. It is quite different that they increased its presence in the West Sea with the blue water capability.

By contrast, they are busying to invest its resources to build a *quasi*-blue water navy capability to safeguard the SLOC alongside the East China Sea west of the Japan-Philippine line and in the South China Sea. Meanwhile, Beijing continues decreasing its naval deployment in the North Sea Fleet in order to redeploy its large and new modern assets into East Sea Fleet and South Sea Fleet due to its territorial interests in the South China Sea and East China Sea.

Should some nations possessed small brown water navy capability and had robust and complex non-military maritime issues, they have to help each other to coping with maritime security concerns, i.e., transnational activities and peaceful resolution of maritime disputes. It is right to say that two nations learnt similar lessons from their histories and they adopt it to possible naval cooperation between two navies. It was historical lesson when the Japanese invaded Korea in the pretext of ultimate conquest of China two nations were determined to formulate bilateral naval alliance to preventing the Japanese invasion. Chinese-Korean joint naval fleet defeated the Japanese naval fleet and ended the war between Japan and Korea during the late 16<sup>th</sup> century. This lesson will reflect on the possible naval cooperation between Chin and Korea with the growing interdependence between two nations in the foreseeable future.

#### ***Scenario V : China's strong desire for safeguarding the Indian Ocean SLOC***

For China, to ensure and safeguard the SLOC ranged from Europe, Africa and Middle East, reached more than 2,000 miles sailing, will be a high priority of its national stable and security in the foreseeable future. Recently resource-hungry China is getting in return to Africa in order to maintain its supply of key energy and mineral resources.<sup>81</sup>

In this regard, the Chinese strategic concern about Indian Ocean centers on the safeguarding of its blue water SLOC that importing of energy and resource from Europe, Africa and Middle East Asia heavily relied. As such, long-range SLOC protection would

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<sup>81</sup> Michael Komesaroff, "China Eyes Congo's Treasures," *Far Eastern Economic Review*, Vol. 17, No. 3, April 2008, pp. 38-41.

involve defending sea lanes throughout the East China Sea and South Asian waters, including the Indian Ocean, the North Arabian Sea, and perhaps even the Persian Gulf and Red Sea.

In this consideration, Indian Ocean looms very large on China's west-bound horizon, concerns about the rivalry on retaining its hegemony in the sub-continental region, perhaps as reflection of concerns about "rise of India".<sup>82</sup> Basically China's maritime concern about Indian Ocean center on threat from its rivalry, India, that recently demonstrated India's close naval exercises with the USN, not to mention Russian navy that was a main supplier for most Indian navy's weapon and system.<sup>83</sup>

Another concern to Beijing stemmed from expansion of India's influence for the South China Sea, recently evidenced in New Delhi's agreement with Hanoi for mutual naval training events.<sup>84</sup> India has participated in the Western Pacific Naval Symposium(WPNS) as observer since 1998.<sup>85</sup> It was the Chinese reaction that China expressed its interest in Indian Ocean SLOC by joining the Indian Ocean Rim Association for Regional Cooperation(IORARC) as a dialogue partner." The IORARC was organized to promote regional economic construction.<sup>86</sup>

For the time being, China is too much preoccupied by "Malacca Strait dilemma", primary because of Beijing's heavily reliance upon Malacca strait where its heavy merchant should pass there towards Indian Ocean and its lack of ability to take care of it. It is fact that China's primary maritime concern west of Malacca strait marks the establishment of the Indian Ocean SLOC that is vital to China's international trade and highlighted by oil imports from the Middle East. The expansion of the Indian navy activities, combined with its special relationship with the United States and New Delhi's concern for its rival, Pakistan, gives China a special position in Beijing's strategic view on the Malacca Strait.

Three Chinese approaches in coping with its Malacca Strait dilemma will be considered as plausible options: establishing land-based oil pipeline from Burma's coast to *Yunam*

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<sup>82</sup> James R. Holmes, "An Indian Monroe Doctrine, but what kind?" *U.S. Naval Institute Proceedings*, April 2008, pp. 20-25.

<sup>83</sup> Scott A. Cuomo, U.S. and Indian Navies Close Again," *U.S. Naval Institute Proceedings*, February 2002, pp. 41-45.

<sup>84</sup> Bernard D. Cole, *The Great Wall at Sea*, p. 171.

<sup>85</sup> The eligibility of membership of the WPNS should be located at the rim area of the Pacific Ocean.

<sup>86</sup> Bernard D. Cole, *The Great Wall at Sea*, p. 35.



province in China, building Chinese military electronic monitoring facilities on the Cocos Islands in the Andaman Sea and Chinese-investment Pakistan port facility, and deployment of its task fleet in the Indian Ocean.<sup>87</sup> These are not involved China's military interaction with Burma and Pakistan, but economic considerations are major issue. It is not surprising that the regional press has reported the Chinese investment on the project of building oil pipeline through the middle of the Malei peninsula connecting between Indian Ocean and South China Sea of the Pacific Ocean.<sup>88</sup> For the time being, none of these options are able to substantiate the public outcome and result of contract.

There are no hard evidences that the PLA Navy possesses appropriate ability to defend its Indian Ocean SLOC of which ability should be blue water navy character, but the rationale for a China's interest in these waters is obvious: maritime concerns and fears that an unfriendly India could control the Indian Ocean's SLOC. Defending the Indian Ocean SLOC is a vital task for the PLA Navy in view of its increasing dependency on oversea trade and energy sources and its rapidly growing merchant marine through Indian Ocean. Unfortunately, the PLA Navy ability to protect the SLOC centered its brown water SLOC, but the next level of SLOC protection includes the blue water SLOC that extend throughout East Asia, from the East China Sea to the Andaman Sea west of Malacca.

China has built its navy in conducting its brown water SLOC – those within one hundred nautical miles of its coast lied so-called First Island Chain – but its ability to defend blue water SLOC is more problematical. For the time being, the PLA Navy operations in the Indian Ocean may not be tasked to a specific fleet, but the South Sea Fleet that its AOR included the eastern approaches to Makassar, Sunda, Lombok, and Malacca straits will be assigned to control the SLOC of the Indian Ocean. Considered the defense area of this fleet, it is very difficult for China to operate a naval presence in the eastern Indian Ocean. It is general trend that the PLA Navy is eager to build an independently operated task fleet in acquiring large aircraft carrier equipped with the ability of

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<sup>87</sup> The PLA denies that it has never built any military facilities in Burma. Some western experts on Asian military affairs also dispute such an allegation. Steven J. Forsberg, "Is a China-India Naval Alliance Possible?" *U.S. Naval Institute Proceedings*, March 2002, pp. 71-72.

<sup>88</sup> According to U.S. Naval officer's research and local journal, China is constructing a series of naval bases along the SLOC to Middle East and has a military agreement with Cambodia and is considering a plan to build a canal in Thailand. Shawn W. Crispin, "Pipe of Prosperity," *Far Eastern Economic Review*, February 19, 2004, pp. 12-16 & Lawrence Spinetta, "Cutting China's "String of Pearls," *U.S. Naval Institute Proceedings*, October 2006, pp. 4042.

operating fixed or rotating-wing air assets at high sea, multi-mission destroyer and frigate and large replenishment-at-sea ships.

For Korea, recently voices from military and political societies have been loud in concerning about maritime security in the Indian Ocean and dispatching naval task force to protect its fishing and merchant vessels that were major targets for failed nation's insurgencies. To some extent these outspoken views reflect Korea's substantial contributions for maritime security in the confined sea areas and the way these views have been articulated is unprecedented. The ROK government is expected to dispatch a surface combatant – most likely the 4,400 ton *Yi Sunshin* class KDX-II destroyer – to Somali waters to prevent abduction by pirates.<sup>89</sup>

In this sense, if China expresses its interest in safeguarding the Indian Ocean SLOC, it would be good for Korea's requirement of ensuring its more than month-long Petroleum SLOC from the Middle East to Africa. As far as Seoul's concern about the Indian Ocean is similar to one of the Chinese, many feasible opportunities will make it for two navies to cooperate each other. This means that the Chinese interests in safeguarding the Indian Ocean will not hurt Korea maritime interests.

Moreover, the PLA Navy is aware of that it lacks crucial capabilities to conduct the protection of long-ranged and high sea SLOC, presumably in the Indian Ocean. It is well known that the PLA Navy operational capabilities related to ASW, AAW, ASuW etc would not satisfy with other nations. Nevertheless, the PLA Navy is forced to prepare for the SLOC protection mission because safety of SLOC means China's economic survival.

Thanks to these discrepancies, the PLA Navy and the ROK Navy can formulate plausible cooperation for the co-hosted defense of the Indian Ocean SLOC. First, China's and Korea's concurrent concerns about Malacca strait led them to make certain coordination of formulating *ad-hoc* joint naval operation to safe the transit of the narrow and busiest international choke point. With regard to energy security, two navies may have ample reasons to share information and to carry out bilateral naval patrol and maritime interdiction operations. Unless the maintenance of safety of Malacca straits would be fully ensured, the Indian Ocean appears to be next concerns for China and Korea.

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<sup>89</sup> *Korea Herald*, October 16, 2008, p. 2.

Second, they need complementary cooperation to conduct the protection of the Indian Ocean SLOC. The naval escort for commercial merchant fleets has to be projected over the whole navigation of them which may take a few thousand nautical miles. In implementing military campaign of SLOC protection, either of navies has to face the problem of being the inferior side in the sea battle – it is the object of attack by advanced enemy aircraft and submarines.

The escort fleet's combat preparation is highly restricted by the civilian transportation ships. For instance, they have to set the speed, route and time according to the escorted ships. These compounded the possibility of bilateral naval cooperation between China and Korea to escort merchant fleets of which contained containers or energies are equally crucial for two nations. The PLA Navy inadequacy capabilities can compensate with the ROK Navy abilities. There will be many new possible operational or doctrine issues of formulating bilateral naval cooperation between the PLA Navy and ROK Navy. For instance, the ROK Navy has very rich experiences in conducting the ASW and AAW operation that are vital for the SLOC protection and anti-piracy operations. That is what the PLA Navy desperately needs when bilateral naval exercise between two navies to execute the SLOC protection operation in the Indian Ocean in the foreseeable future. For Korea, China appears not to be troublemaker to disrupt the Indian Ocean SLOC.

## **CONCLUSIONS: FINDINGS TO FOSTER NAVAL COOPERATION BETWEEN TWO NAVIES**

China influences Korea and is influenced by Korea in term of maritime nature. The rising of China and Korea as maritime power will be the first one of this consideration. In line with their strong economic interaction and political dynamism two nations will be reliable and strong stakeholders of re-ordering regional maritime security framework. In this regard, two nations see an increasingly confident their emerging of commonality, but surprisingly none want differences to be reason in triggering unexpected conflicts of the region.

As China's naval modernization is aimed mainly at recovering its traditional dominant nation status with global influence, it will deeply affect on Korea's national security in

nature. China did take unilaterally harsh offensive actions against Korea in the 1960s and 1970s. Since the 1980s, however, there has been a distinction between what China dealt with Korea as weak nation and what China as major regional power will see Korea in its dominated periphery. As Korea is developed as strong naval power, its impact will dominate response in China. As interaction between China and Korea will be complementary, there will be more cooperative factors than those of the conflicts between two nations. It is fact that rudimentary problems between two nations still remain and have not been resolved yet.

As long as two navies are eager to figure out the way of resolving difficulties, five hypothetical scenario-based analyses discussed above demonstrate that there will be more harmonious impacts than pessimistic one. There are several suggestions for bilateral naval cooperation between China and Korea based on what five hypothetical scenario-based analyses have been found.

#### ***Be aware of reality of Chinese naval modernization***

There is a debate on what constitutes the result of the current Chinese navy modernization. As analyses of Chinese navy modernization discussed above shown, Chinese navy still have far away to become a blue water navy status and possess the powerful and enable task fleet. Some argued that contrary to the argument that the Chinese navy modernization was related to the Chinese ambition for retaining its traditional dominant prestige, it is still largely lingered by internal factors, i.e., political and economic constraints.

In terms of technology, Chinese navy is still striving to establish a modern navy with a strong and comprehensive and real high-tech combat capability. For instance, the ability in the PLAN naval operation is not equal with its rivalries, Japan and the United States, perhaps Russia. Specifically, the Chinese navy's capabilities such as independent and mobile campaigns for disrupting the enemy's SLOC, waging fleet-to-fleet sea battles against regional major powers, mass amphibious operation against Taiwan's declaration of independence status, and blockading the enemy's ports are fairly limited. Even though Current the Chinese naval modernization strategy are not clear, the development of the Chinese naval power is less effective and does not produce substantial results focusing on Beijing's current intention in this crucial but often overlooked topic. It is fair to say that China's naval power build-up has not come

to the point of being a destabilizing factor in this part of the world.

***Be increase neutral interests in coping with differences***

In order to cope with differences between two nations, they have to show their willingness to each other to enhance neutral interests in contributing their increased ability to formulate bilateral naval cooperation in time of regional contingencies. Feasible maritime confrontation between two nations is much easier and simpler than South China Sea dispute and Taiwan crisis. Even though there are feasibilities of occurring confrontation at sea, the possibility of use of fleet force is very much low.

Korea is to act as if China is not a threat because they seem not to prepare for responding to Beijing as a competitor. Likewise, China has to be responded to Korea as a likely partner in coping with maritime issues between two nations. China has to play its role as *status quo* power to maintain peace and stable maritime security of the region. There are many misleading publications and observations that China will be a major troublemaker to disrupt the regional maritime security order. But, it seems to be exaggerated in seeing only myth of the Chinese military modernization.

As Korea has been named as few nations to maintain its mutual defense pact with the United States since the world war II, the United States presence in Korea will be one of the Chinese major concerns that may affect on Chinese national security. Whereas China had bad experiences from military-to-military conflict with the United States during the 1950s and 1960s, Korea has maintained strong military-to-military alliance with the United States. However, it was common that transoceanic USN has remarked its strong security guarantee against the possibility of imminent threat from North Korea and supported its commitment to curtail Japanese remilitarization as good facilitator. Since the United States and Korea joint declaration of adopting so-called “strategic flexibility” for the USFK in 2004, the Chinese expressed its concern about the role of the United States military force in Korea remarked by subtle indication of intervening Taiwan contingency over the Taiwan Straits.

As a part of this concern, however, the USFK will participate in presumably peacekeeping missions in line with Taiwan crisis in order to maintain stability in potentially troubled inland in Taiwan. Since the late of 1990s the Chinese military has been major participant in organize multinational PKO missions of the world. China may

acknowledge that the USFK major function of participating in PKO operation will be acceptable to safeguard peace and stability in emergency situations in Taiwan.

Therefore, the various level of sophisticated strategy needs to cope with differences between two navies and a review of the naval environment in East Asia and reviews specific scenarios in which China might not choose to employ naval power and avoid any possibility of confronting between two navies.

### ***Be establish various dialogues and interactions***

Even though military interaction between China and Korea has begun since 1992, its developmental phase is very low-level of military exchange. Their military-to-military relations still remained a level of exchanging military personal from occasion to occasion until the late 1990s.

Since 1999 two nations have conducted various military interactions, including visits by military high-profile figures, port-call by naval ships and establishment of non-military purpose naval exercises as the two nations set up a guideline of “strategic relationship”.<sup>90</sup>

In April last year, two nation’s military authorities agreed to establish hot lines between their navies and air forces in a bid to reduce accidental crisis between two nations. Under the agreement, a naval hot line has to link the ROKN 2<sup>nd</sup> Fleet in *Pyeongtaek*, Korea, to China’s North Sea Fleet command in *Qingdao*, Shandong Province, China. Due to Chinese declination to a final approval to activate it, it has substantiated yet. The naval hot line is aimed at reducing tension in the West Sea, where disputes between two Koreas have occasionally arisen over illegal fishing activities by Chinese fishermen. Chinese fishing vessels operated alongside the NLL has been much more than two Koreas’ vessels.<sup>91</sup>

In October 2008, Korea Navy successfully invited the PLAN delegation and ships to

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<sup>90</sup> There were two different terms to define relationship between China and Korea: strategic cooperative partnership, strategic partnership. From Chinese point of view, any sort of announcement of a “strategic partnership” is not “strategic” in the classic sense of the term and is unlikely to be substantive.

<sup>91</sup> According to the ROK government, an estimated 150 to 200 Chinese vessels engaged in illicit fishing in the West Sea each day. Jung Sung-ki, “South Korea Seeks Closer Military Ties With China,” *Defense News*, September 1, 2008, pp. 28-30.

participate in the 2008 International Fleet Review in which held in Busan in order to celebrate the 60<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the foundation of the Republic of Korea government and establishment of the Republic of Korea Navy. It was very rare case that the PLAN delegation and ships together participated in certain events.

It is conceivable that two navies are to establish non-binding joint arbitrary committee consisted of ex-generals and admirals in two navies. There has been an argument of direct navy-to-navy talk should be established to cope with difficulties between them. However, to negotiate with the Chinese leadership always related for informal channel between political and military figures of the CCP, particularly in the CMC. Korea has to establish its informal relationship with retired Admirals and Generals of the PLA. This conjunction of informal channel appears to be a strong connection in Seoul's increasing negotiation tactics in resolving various maritime conflicts with China.

***Be enhance bilateral naval cooperation on protection of SLOC***

Korean navy should develop its close naval relationship with the PLAN by not threat-to-threat comparison, but capability-to-capability complementary. Korea has to express that there are many contributions for maintaining safe and security the regional SLOC in terms of its bilateral naval cooperation with China. As Korea's navy is one of the fastest developing navies of the world, this cooperation will be the best example of tickling matched difficulties of two nations influenced by their bitter modern history. There will be some possibilities to make cooperation between two navies: close cooperation to protect high-sea SLOC from Middle East areas to Northeast Asia via Indian Ocean, and narrow and dangerous choke points, i.e., Malacca Strait, counter transnational threats, i.e., drug trafficking, maritime terror, deterrence of the sea pollution due to accident at sea. China's and Korea's so-called "Malacca strait dilemma" lead two navies to coordinate the formation of joint naval operation to safe the transit of the narrow and busiest international choke point. With regard to oil-related concerns, two navies will have ample reasons to share information and to conduct joint naval patrol operation and maritime interdiction operation.

From the Chinese perspective, there are few SLOC-related sea routes between two nations. Rather, there are historical sea trade routes through West Sea and these ranges less than 200 miles sea connection between them. Likewise, the United States position has been to urge peaceful resolution of the area's territorial disputes, insisting

only that freedom of navigation not be restricted. Beijing agrees it has no intention of interfering with this right, and has not attempted to so, while warning the ASEAN states against conducting military exercises with U.S. forces.

In conclusion, it might appear that there is no way to find a policy prescriptions flow from either a confrontation-driven or cooperation-oriented analysis of Korean navy's strategy toward Chinese navy. It is obvious that the long-term competition between two navies regarding their ambitious naval force transformation appears to produce conflict, but near/medium term partnership with their maritime cooperation represents an intermediate case. From Korean point of view, China is no longer a weak maritime nation, but emerging maritime power equipped with enabled fleet force. As China is developed as strong maritime power, its impact will dominate responsive in Korea.



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**“PLA Navy Build Up and Implications for US Strategy in East Asia and for the US  
Navy”**

**A paper by**

**Michael McDevitt**

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**CNA**

This paper represents the views of the author and should not be interpreted as representing an official research product of CNA, nor does it speak for the U.S. Navy

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## **Introduction**

Asia's security environment has been stable and relatively predictable since the end of the Vietnam War. Since that time Asia has benefited from a unique balance of power, in which the continental powers of Asia—first the Soviet Union and then China—were “balanced” by the US-led coalition of Asian littoral powers of which included America's friends and allies. This period of geo-strategic stability provided the opportunity for virtually all of the nations of the region to focus on internal political stability and on economic development.

One of the most important reasons why this three and a half decade long period of stability exists is that a real military balance exists. The military capability of each side can prevent any attempt by the other side to intrude in a militarily significant way into their respective domains. The continental powers were safe from invasion, thanks to large armies, vast territories and nuclear weapons. US friends and allies were safe from invasion and maritime blockade thanks to US and allied air and sea power, which is backstopped by the US nuclear arsenal.

South Korea is a special case, because its principle threat is literally next door, and not separated by a water barrier. To guard against another North Korean attempt to invade and eliminate the Republic of Korea as a sovereign entity the United States maintains sizable ground and air forces on the peninsula. Over the years the military balance on the Korean peninsula has settled into postures on each side of the DMZ that favor defense, which has precluded attempts to reunify by force.

## **This Balance is in Jeopardy**

The dramatic success of Beijing's “reform and opening up” economic policies have yielded the revenues necessary to underwrite a comprehensive modernization of every aspect of the PLA. For the first time in over two centuries, China is wealthy enough to

finance a systemic and well-conceived modernization that has already made the PLA, because of its size, and pockets of excellence such as its missile forces, the premier Asian military.

Commentators often remark that the United States is the dominant military power in Asia. Actually, this is incorrect, an overstatement. The reality is that China is, and has been, the dominant military power on the continent of Asia since Mao Tse-tung drove America's Nationalist Chinese allies off the continent. China's continental preeminence was bloodily illustrated during the Korean War, when US forces were fought to a standstill halfway up the Korean peninsula after the intervention of the Chinese People's Volunteers (CPV). America's respect for China continental prowess was reaffirmed during the Vietnam War, when the Johnson administration refused to countenance a number of operationally sensible military actions, such as interdicting railways from China or mining Haiphong harbor because of concerns that China would enter the war.

China's conventional military superiority over its other traditional continental rivals is also clear. The Vietnamese inflicted terrible losses on the PLA during China's 1979 invasion, but the PLA did achieve its "lesson teaching" strategic objective. Despite reverses, the PLA was poised to march on Hanoi when Beijing called a halt to the invasion. Hanoi learned that it was perilous to ignore the strategic interests of Beijing.<sup>1</sup> Furthermore, since the 1970's the military capability of China's PLA and Vietnam's PAVN have been on different trajectories. The erstwhile "Prussians of Asia," as the PAVN was dubbed 30 years ago, have declined precipitously to a point where they are a mere shadow of their former selves, while the PLA, smarting from the black eye it received from the PAVN in 1979, has been constantly improving.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Henry J. Kenny, *The Shadow of the Dragon*, Brassey's, Washington DC, 2002, Kenny writes, "Although the PAVN troops taught the PLA a military lesson, China taught Vietnam a political lesson. It taught Vietnamese political leaders that China would not hesitate to use force in the event Vietnamese interests seriously conflicted with those of China." p.53.

<sup>2</sup> Vietnam was the only significant Southeast Asian military not to engage in some sort of military modernization effort during the 1990's. Following withdrawal from Cambodia in the late 1980's the PAVN became increasingly involved in "business" with a concomitant reduction in readiness and capability. Over the past few years Hanoi has been gradually trying to redress weaknesses; particularly

Arguably, the same relative change in military circumstances exists for the Russian forces east of the Urals vis-à-vis the PLA. On China's western frontier the Indian Army has improved since being drubbed by the PLA in 1962, but the Himalayan terrain on the boarder between China and India inhibits large-scale offensive operations. In sum, none of China's continental neighbors pose a credible conventional threat of aggression against China.

On the other hand, it is the United States and its allies that maintain the overwhelming military advantage on and beyond the littoral of East Asia. The sustained presence of the US Seventh Fleet effectively checks the ability of China to exercise "boots on the ground" military influence beyond where its army can walk or drive. Today, as it has for decades China dominates the continent while the United States and its island<sup>3</sup> and archipelagic allies are, for the time being, militarily predominant in maritime Asia.

### **The Rationale behind China's Interest in its Maritime Frontier**

Over the last 15 years China has done a good job resolving disputes that could lead to flash points with Russia, Vietnam, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan and India and by negotiating strategic partnerships with most of these countries. However, the strategic outlook off China's eastern seaboard and maritime approaches is replete with problems and vulnerabilities. This is not a new issue for China. Weakness along the maritime frontier has historic resonance for Beijing. The so called "Century of Humiliation" was the result successful military operations by European powers and then Japan against China that came *from the sea*.

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those associated with protection of its maritime resources. Ashley Tellis and Michael Wills editors, *Strategic Asia 2005-06 "Military Modernization in an Era of Uncertainty*, National Bureau of Asian Research, 2005, p.290.

<sup>3</sup> So long as South Korea is "separated" by North Korea from continental Asia it is, at least conceptually, a de facto island nation.

The reality that faces Beijing is that the vast majority of China's outstanding sovereignty and strategic issues are *maritime* in nature. Specifically, Taiwan is an island. It is the combination of Taiwan's air defense and the threat of intervention by the US military (primarily the US Navy) that effectively keeps the Taiwan Strait a moat rather than a highway open to the PLA.

While it appears that a compromise solution to territorial disputes with Japan over seabed resources in the East China Sea has been reached, over the past three years nationalist pressures played a role in political decisions taken in both capitals to periodically deploy naval and coast guard vessels to the disputed area to buttress national claims. The point being that sovereignty issues have the potential to quickly inflame public opinion which in turn has an impact on policy choices. Further south, unsettled territorial disputes in the South China Sea over the largely uninhabitable Spratly Islands are a maritime issue of considerable importance because of the associated natural resources within the EEZ of these small islets and terrain features. The South China Sea itself is of importance both because the main shipping route to China from the Indian Ocean traverses the South China Sea.

While Taiwan is certainly the most important maritime strategic issue for China, arguably of equal strategic significance is the geostrategic reality that China's economic center of gravity is on its East Coast. As a "seaboard," it is extremely vulnerable to attack from the sea—a military task the United States is uniquely suited to execute. In fact, China's entire national strategy of reform and opening depends largely upon maritime commerce—i.e., trade.

China's economic development is increasing dependent on importing oil and liquefied natural gas (LNG) from abroad, most of which will come to China by sea. As a result China is concerned about its energy security—or, as one commentator put it, "energy insecurity" because those shipments could potentially be interrupted by a hostile naval

power.<sup>4</sup>

Finally, the United States is world's foremost naval power and has, over the last 50 odd years, established a significant naval presence in the Western Pacific, which is effectively on China's doorstep. The mission of American forces is preserve regional stability, which implicitly includes making certain that China is not able to militarily coerce Asian nations into agreements they would not otherwise have been willing to accept. In other words, to prevent China from brandishing its growing capabilities to settle the Taiwan question or resolve other outstanding maritime claims by *force majeure* alone. The United States checks China off the littoral of East Asia.

The United States is also closely allied with China's "historic" antagonist Japan, which also has an excellent navy and a formidable maritime tradition. China's is aware its economic health depends upon unimpeded access to and use of the high seas and it knows that the United States and its closest Asian ally are maritime powers that could seriously disrupt its economic development in the case of war.

When all of these factors are taken into account, it is not a surprise that Chinese strategists consider its "main strategic direction"<sup>5</sup> eastward from its eastern seaboard toward the Pacific Ocean, and Southeast toward the South China Sea and the shipping lanes from the Middle East.

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<sup>4</sup> Dan Blumenthal and Joseph Lin, "Oil Obsession: Energy Appetite Fuels Beijing's Plans to Protect Vital Sea Lines," *Armed Forces Journal*, June 2006. Posted on the AEI website, [http://www.aei.org/publications/pubID.24499,filter.all/pub\\_detail.asp](http://www.aei.org/publications/pubID.24499,filter.all/pub_detail.asp)  
Page: 6

<sup>5</sup> The PLA Academy of Military Science defines the major strategic direction as "...the focal point of the struggle of contradictions between ourselves and the enemy...in the overall strategic situation, it is the vital point of *greatest importance* (emphasis added)." In other words, the major strategic direction is where China's most important interests are either threatened or unresolved. *The Science of Military Strategy* goes on to say, "The major strategic direction is basically determined according to the national strategic interests and the fundamental international and domestic strategic situation." Peng Guangqian and Yang Youzhi, editors, *The Science of Military Strategy* (Beijing: Military Science Publishing House, Academy of Military Science of the People's Liberation Army, 2005): p 231-3.

## **The Obvious Decision: More Resources for the Defense of China's Maritime Approaches**

The fact that the PLA Navy has grown over the past 15 years clearly implies that China's leaders, military and civilian, who are generally not schooled in things maritime, have found the need to address these strategic shortfalls compelling. This suggests the obvious: the China's leaders believe that the strategic interests of the state can only be secured with a robust naval force, which is a historic departure from the strategic traditions of China.

Beijing's concerns with maritime issues was publicly announced in the 2004 Chinese Defense White Paper which candidly made clear that the PLA Navy, the PLA Air Force and the PLA ballistic missile force—the Second Artillery—and not the Army, are to receive priority in funding. Further it explicitly lays out its ambitions for the PLA Navy, Air Force, and Second Artillery:

While continuing to attach importance to the building of the Army, the PLA gives priority to the building of the Navy, Air Force and Second Artillery force to seek balanced development of the combat force structure, *in order to strengthen the capabilities for winning both command of the sea and command of the air, and conducting strategic counter strikes.* (Emphasis added.)<sup>6</sup>

## **Commanding the Sea: Translating the Aspiration into a Credible Military Capability**

The idea of “command of the sea” date back to the writings of Alfred Thayer Mahan and Julian Corbett, although a search of their writings will yield often contradictory definitions, the most widely accepted understanding of command of the sea means having the ability to prevent an enemy from using some segment of maritime geography for as

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<sup>6</sup> PRC Defense White Paper, December 2004, Information Office of the State Council of the PRC, December 2004, Beijing. <http://english.people.com.cn/whitepaper/defense2004>

long as one wishes. In other words, one party can use the sea at its pleasure, while the opponent cannot.<sup>7</sup> At a conceptual level, Chinese planners faced choices regarding how best to accomplish the mission of commanding the sea. One approach Beijing could have followed would be “a replay” of the Imperial Japanese Navy. In other words a “blue-water” navy able to operate independently on the high seas equipped with balanced capabilities that could actively contest the U.S. Navy *at sea* for regional maritime dominance. (This would be a navy, for example, capable of fighting a 21<sup>st</sup> century the Battle of the Philippine Sea with the USN over naval dominance in the Western Pacific). Such a navy would require aircraft carriers to fight for and gain sea control. It also need credible maritime air defense capability in the form of escorting cruisers and destroyers, an amphibious force for the invasion of Taiwan, and an effective anti-submarine defense against USN and allied submarines.

The China’s relationship with the Soviets provided the second, more obvious, template for the PLA. The geostrategic circumstances facing the Soviet Union and China are similar in terms of threats from the sea. During the later decades of the Cold War the Soviet Union put in place a defensive strategy that China is in the process of replicating. The defensive Soviet-style anti-access model is less expensive, fits within a “continental” strategic culture and is easier and more quickly implemented than trying to build and train a fully balanced blue-water navy. The Soviet template was straightforward: employ a very effective open-ocean surveillance system to detect approaching naval forces and then use this information to muster attacks by land-based aircraft and by submarines.

That is exactly what China is doing. It is knitting together a capability that is composed of a very effective open-ocean surveillance system to locate approaching naval forces so they can be attacked by land-based aircraft armed with cruise missiles, by submarines with both torpedoes and cruise missiles and eventually with conventionally tipped ballistic missiles that are able to hit maneuvering ships. Adopting this template also permitted the PLA to capitalize on Soviet-developed technology and operational

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<sup>7</sup> Colin S. Gray, *The Leverage of Sea Power: The Strategic Advantages of Navies in War*, New York, the Free Press, a division of MacMillan, Inc., 1992, pp 19, 274.



concepts.

Because surveillance is the key to the effectiveness of the entire “system” China has invested heavily in traditional direction finding systems, land-based over the horizon radar’s that “look” out to sea, and especially on space-based surveillance systems. Because space-based systems are so important in open-ocean surveillance, it is reasonable to expect a continued emphasis in this area. According to open sources, China currently has seven or eight satellites in orbit that can contribute to ocean surveillance. Significantly, in April 2006 Beijing launched its first radar satellite. It carries synthetic aperture radar, which is excellent for identifying ships and can probably observe a ship as small as 20 meters in length.<sup>8</sup> This is the first in a constellation of radar-satellites that are necessary if the objective is to maintain around-the-clock coverage.

The land-based air component of the layered defense consists of both PLA Air Force and PLA Naval Air Force aircraft. Again, according to open-source information, the only PLA Air Force bombers with anti-ship missiles are a single regiment (about 20 aircraft) of the Badger-variant B6H bomber. These aircraft have been practicing over-water missions and anti-ship attacks since around 2002. The PLA Air Force also has one regiment of FB-7 fighter-bombers and two of the new Russian-built Su-30MKK multi-role regiments that could be used in anti-ship roles. PLA Naval aviation has one bomber regiment, one FB-7 regiment, and one Su-30MKK regiment that are capable of launching anti-ship cruise missiles. Again, each regiment has about 18–20 aircraft.<sup>9</sup>

The PLA Air Force and Naval Aviation Force can field about seven regiments of aircraft with cruise missiles to attack approaching warships—perhaps 130–140 aircraft. Based on an old Soviet metric of two regiments per carrier battlegroup, the PLA could muster

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<sup>8</sup> Conversation with Mr. Dean Cheng: CNA China analyst and a leading expert on Chinese space activities. See also his conference report, *China’s Space Program: Civilian, Commercial and Military Aspects, A CNA Conference Report* (Alexandria, VA: The CNA Corporation, May 2006).

<sup>9</sup> Discussion with Ken Allen, September 6, 2006.

enough aircraft to attack a three-carrier force. But it has not yet fielded a long-range, air-launched cruise missile that would permit these aircraft to launch while remaining outside the surface-to-air missile envelope of US warships. Until they can fire a cruise missile at ships while remaining out of range of ship borne defenses these aircraft would be very vulnerable.

The PLA has apparently decided to emphasize its submarine force as the most important element in its layered defense. This makes sense, given the inherent difficulty for the USN, or for that matter any navy, has in locating very quiet modern submarines. The PLAN gets the “most bang for the buck” from submarines because finding a submarine is difficult and to search for them has historically required a large number of dedicated ships, airplanes and submarines. Between 1995 and 2007, the PLA Navy commissioned 37 new submarines; so far only 3 are nuclear powered. Because the vast majority of the PLA Navy submarine force is conventionally powered it has one significant operational drawback; limited endurance and speed.<sup>10</sup> Nonetheless, today it is an imposing force, and there is every expectation that it will continue to improve and to add more nuclear-powered subs.

Operationally, submarines may have to be stationed as far away as 1200 nautical miles (the PLA open source assessment of the refueled combat radius of an F/A-18)<sup>11</sup> from the PRC coast so they can concentrate and attack carrier forces before carrier aircraft can be involved in numbers in the air battle over the Taiwan Strait. If the intent is to delay the US Navy, and perhaps even deter it from proceeding toward Taiwan, the PLA Navy will have to mass submarines in large numbers once carrier forces have been located in order to raise the risk to US surface ships to the point where commanders might elect to stay away until the submarine problem is in hand.. This may take as many as six or more PLA

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<sup>10</sup> Ronald O’Rourke, *China Naval Modernization: Implications for U.S. Navy Capabilities—Background and Issues for Congress*, CRS Report for Congress, updated October 8, 2008. CRS website, Order Code RL 33153: 8. This is the single best open-source compilation of information on the PLA Navy available to scholars and research specialists.

<sup>11</sup> Li Xinqi et al, “Precaution Model and Simulation Actualization” Second Artillery Engineering College paper.

Navy submarines per approaching carrier strike group.

For example, if three to four US carriers respond to an attack against Taiwan, the PLA Navy would need at least 18 to 24 submarines on station. Its ability to sustain that posture would be a function of how often submarines rotated home and how long it would take to transit between homeport and patrol station. If one assumes it takes three to keep one on station (one on station, one going home, one getting ready to go), somewhere between 60 to 75 modern submarines would be required to sustain an anti-carrier submarine force. In other words, it is reasonable to expect the PLA Navy to continue to grow a modern submarine force if it is to execute an anti-access strategy with confidence.

The PRC has added a new element to the layered defense—one that is uniquely Chinese and uses one of the PLA's most effective capabilities. This new wrinkle is to use ballistic missiles to attack moving surface warships.<sup>12</sup> Traditionally, ballistic missiles were considered a poor weapon to use against ships at sea: ships move, and once the missile is fired, the aim point of a ballistic trajectory, by definition, cannot be altered to account for target motion.

What the PLA is apparently trying to do is place seekers in high-explosive missile warheads that will activate as the warhead descends into the target area, and then steer the warhead to the moving ship. This is a difficult technical task depends on accurate surveillance plus missile warhead maneuvering technology that can slow down the warhead when it reenters the atmosphere so the seekers are not burned up by the heat of reentry.

The Second Artillery is clearing working on this problem. In a paper published by the Second Artillery Engineering College, the PLA authors conclude:

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<sup>12</sup> DOD Report to Congress, 4. The report says, "China is exploring the use of ballistic missiles for anti-access/sea-denial missions."

Providing terminal guidance to ballistic missiles is critical to the successful launch of a precision attack on a slow moving large target at sea. Based on the results from simulation, missiles with terminal guidance capability can have a relatively large range of maneuverability, which may be as large as 100 kilometers (53nm)....Large surface targets at sea, such as aircraft carriers, are relatively poor in maneuverability. It cannot effectively escape an attack within a short period of time. Therefore, a ballistic missile with terminal guidance capability....is fully capable of effectively attacking this type of target with high precision.<sup>13</sup>

Aside from the technical challenge associated with missile warhead design, the command and control problem of determining an accurate location of an aircraft carrier, getting that information to a missile firing unit in a timely fashion, translating positional information into a fire control solution for the missile which has to include missile time of flight before the target ship moves beyond the terminal seekers window is also an issue. The central point is however, that these all appear to be solvable problems.

### **Relating an Anti-Access Strategy to China's Regional Diplomatic Strategy**

This approach maritime strategy also fits well with the political message that Beijing has been sending the world: China's rise will be peaceful and non-threatening. Adopting an obviously defense oriented maritime strategy provides tangible evidence to regional observers that China is not going to become an expeditionary or power-projection threat. Of course, Japan and the Korean peninsula are within or adjacent to the PLAN's apparent sea control threshold—the area inside the first island chain which includes the East China Sea and the Sea of Japan. From Japan and Korea's perspective, the PLAN submarine force is a capability-based threat to its economic lifelines of maritime trade that it cannot, and probably will not, ignore.

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<sup>13</sup> Tan Shoulin and Zhang Daqiao, (Second Artillery Engineering College, Xian, China), "Determination and Evaluation of Effective Homing Range for Ballistic Missile Attacking Aircraft Carrier," Information Command and Control System and Simulation Technology, Vol 128, No. 4, August 2006, pp.6-9.

For the rest of Asia, an avowedly power-projection PLAN would seem to be counterproductive to China's broader strategic objectives of not so worrying its neighbors that they will be inclined to contemplate some type of anti-Chinese containment policy. To illustrate the point, China's focus on conventionally powered rather than nuclear powered submarines reinforces the diplomatic "peaceful development" message, since compared to nuclear powered submarines which have almost unconstrained submerged endurance, conventionally powered submarines are limited in range and speed. They also fit within the regional norm since Australia, South Korea, Japan, Singapore, Malaysia and Indonesia all have conventional submarines for "defense." In sum, the naval, air and missile capability that China is gradually fielding could satisfy its strategic objectives without triggering a negative response, except as mentioned from Japan and Korea.

In contemporary terminology the Pentagon has elected to characterize China's approach as an "*anti-access*" operational concept. In other words a military concept of operations aimed at keeping an approaching naval force from closing to within striking range of the Chinese mainland and Taiwan Strait. Specifically, China aims to have the ability to deny the US military access to the region so it could not interfere with a PLA use of force to resolve many of its outstanding maritime strategic issues.

As a continental power that only recently has come to grips with the need to defending its interests from a serious attack from the sea China has opted for a strategy that is at once affordable, militarily practical, and comprehensive. It is comprehensive in the sense that its combined naval, air force and strategic missile force is well suited to dealing with most of the long list of Beijing's outstanding strategic issues that are maritime in nature. Not only is this approach to strategy sensible from an operational perspective, it is also on its face inherently defensive, which fits perfectly with Beijing's putative grand strategy of "Peaceful Development."

It would be a mistake, however, not to recognize that while being sensible, it also embodies some serious technical challenges that Beijing must overcome. Effective and timely open-ocean surveillance is an essential prerequisite, as it has been for any

continental power faced with a foe approaching from the sea. That means the PLA will become increasingly dependent on space-based surveillance and communications. It also means that it must master the difficult feat of being able to hit moving ships with ballistic missiles. This is not a trivial achievement, and is one that is dependent on reliable real time surveillance and communications. If Beijing can actually accomplish this it can present the United States with two incredibly difficult tactical challenges—hunting down very quiet submarines, and somehow negating the ship-killing potential of ballistic missiles.

Of course, nothing in this approach keeps Beijing from pursuing a future option of creating a genuine power projection navy. It is also important to keep in mind that Beijing's anti-access approach is a *wartime* strategy, which like the Soviets before them, will hopefully never actually be tested. In peacetime, which is to say most of the time, the PLA Navy is likely to be engaged in the sort of peacetime operations that other large navy's do routinely. The activities include training, presence operations in support of friends and allies, port visits to show the flag, humanitarian operations in response to natural disasters and exercising with regional navies as an element of politically motivated engagement activities.

### **The Strategic Implications of China's Anti-Access Maritime Strategy**

By gradually improving its military capabilities off-shore, albeit largely for strategically reasonable defensive purposes, China is beginning to “intrude” into the maritime region that has been the preserve of the United States and its allies for the past half-century. Left unaddressed, this will have the effect of upsetting the five-decade-old balance of power that has been so successful in preserving stability in the region.

The efficacy of the US strategic position on the rim land of Asia depends upon America's ability to use the seas to guarantee the security of our East Asian allies, and pursue American national interests. By attempting to achieve security on its maritime frontier,

Beijing is creating a dynamic that, as its security situation improves, is making the security environment for Japan, Taiwan and potentially South Korea, worse.

Although keeping the US from interfering in case of conflict between China and Taiwan is the main rationale behind China's anti-access strategy, the unhappy reality is that any Chinese maritime strategy that is effective in denying support to Taiwan is almost by definition equally as effective in denying US assistance to Japan and South Korea because of the maritime geography of the Western Pacific. As long as the central element of its wartime strategy is to keep US power as far away from East Asia as possible, China creates a security dilemma for US friends and allies in Northeast Asia. As China capability to deny access improves, the security situation of those friends and allies grows worse, unless the US and its allies are able to undermine the basis of the China's strategy.

Another implication of trying to keep the United States at arm's length revolves around the need for both military's to plan for worst –case contingencies. In this case if China feels obliged to use force against Taiwan, and the US feels equally obliged to intervene to prevent reunification from taking place through the use of force. As a result, both the PLA and the US military are actively planning how best to defeat the other. This war planning dynamic obviously colors the atmosphere between the two militaries, and no matter how involved military to military engagement becomes, the thought that "I may have to fight these guys over Taiwan" is on the mind of senior officers on both sides. Until Beijing renounces the use of force in dealing with the issue of reunification with Taiwan this factor is going inhibit the development of a truly cordial and trusting military to military relationship between China and the United States. In addition, remain no matter how close cross-strait relations become as long as the use of force remains on the table as part of Beijing's declaratory Taiwan policy the need to plan to deter a use of force remains.

A final implication is the need for the United States to ensure that the perception does not grow through East Asia, that China has the ability to trump US presence in the region if it chooses to. To avoid creating a belief that the United States is on the way to becoming a

“paper tiger” it is important that America continues to maintain its current operational advantages by staying ahead of PLA capability improvements. It is important US friends and allies never come to the conclusion that their security relationship with the United States is a waste of time, because if a real crisis with China occurs Washington would be powerless to respond militarily.

### **American Responses to the Evolving Security Landscape**

US policy reactions to the evolving strategic landscape of Northeast Asia have been clear, practical and transparent. There have been no shortage of official statements in the form of Congressional testimony by responsible officials, official documents approved by the White House such as the March 2006 National Security Strategy, the Defense Department Quadrennial Defense Review (QDR) of 2006, Department of Defense Annual Reports to Congress on the Military Power of the Peoples republic of China and a series of Congressional Research Service reports to Congress of China’s Naval Modernization that indicate that the across the US government officials are keeping a close eye on the growth of Chinese military capabilities—especially those that could change the Eastern Asian strategic balance in a way that could disadvantage the United States and our allies.

Perhaps the clearest statement that makes this point is found in the 2006 QDR. It says, “China has the greatest potential to compete militarily with the United States and field disruptive technologies that could over time offset traditional US military advantages.”<sup>14</sup> It is significant that former Deputy Secretary of Defense Richard Lawless, choose to emphasize that passage in his last testimony on Capital Hill.

Lawless said:

“The near term focus for the PLA appears to be on preparing for military

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<sup>14</sup> *The Report of the 2006 Quadrennial Defense Review* (hereinafter QDR), February 6, 2006, p 29, [www.defenselink.mil/pubs/](http://www.defenselink.mil/pubs/)



contingencies in the Taiwan Strait. China's armed forces are rapidly developing capabilities designed to coerce or compel a settlement of the cross strait dispute while simultaneously deterring, delaying or denying effective third-party, including US intervention. Long term trends, based on analysis of acquisitions, authoritative writings, and training and exercise programs, also suggest that Beijing is generating capabilities to employ military force for other regional contingencies, such as conflicts over resources or territory....China's counter-space efforts....witnessed during the January 2007 test...will enable Beijing to hold at risk the assets of all space-faring nations. Finally, China's continued pursuit and anti-access and area denial strategies is expanding from traditional land, sea, air dimensions of the modern battlefield to include space and cyber space."<sup>15</sup>

US spokesmen are at pains to make clear the US is not trying to contain China. But they also indicate that the US is going to hedge against a China whose intentions could become more assertive. More recently the State Department seems to have dropped use of the term "hedge" because Chinese interlocutors considered that a synonym for "contain" and now talk about trying to "shape" Chinese behavior through the combination of strengthened US bilateral alliances and a strong military presence in the region.

In this sense what does shaping mean? In a security sense it means trying to remove options available to Beijing. I would argue shaping is preserving an equilibrium in East Asia that discourages Beijing from expansionism.

Preserving the equilibrium of the past decades is what the US must do. The 2006 QDR made clear that America is not backing away from the idea that it is important to maintain a significant military presence in the region. This has been a fundamental in America's

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<sup>15</sup> The Honorable Richard P. Lawless, Deputy Under Secretary of Defense for Asian and Pacific Security Affairs, "*China: Recent Security Developments*," prepared statement before the House Armed Services Committee, June 13, 2007. In authors possession.

East Asia strategy for a very long time because of the enormous distances that separate the opposite sides of the Pacific Rim.

In the introduction to the 2006 National Security Strategy President Bush made a classic statement of US strategy that highlights the importance Washington has long placed on keeping US military power deployed abroad. He states, “We fight our enemies abroad instead of waiting for them to arrive in our country. We seek to shape the world, not merely be shaped by it; to influence events for the better instead of being at their mercy.”<sup>16</sup>

The Defense Department has been quite specific about the importance of maintaining US military presence in East Asia. In the 2006 QDR, specific reference is made to the rotational deployments of Air Force bombers to Guam, in order to provide, “...Pacific Command a continuous bomber presence in the Asia-Pacific region”<sup>17</sup> The QDR also announces that the Navy will adjust its force posture so that at least six operationally ready and logistically sustainable carriers are available for deployment. It also indicates that the Navy needs to ensure that 60% of its submarine force is home ported in the Pacific.<sup>18</sup> The reason given for these shifts is to enable the Pacific Fleet to improve its engagement, presence and deterrent posture.

It seems clear that the US is intent on not losing any ground in terms of capabilities as China improves PLA capabilities. As the PLA’s capabilities improve, so too are US capabilities in the region. The United States seems intent on maintaining America’s current advantages that allow it to shape and deter.<sup>19</sup> While some might characterize this as an arms race, what is actually taking place is *a capability competition* between the

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<sup>16</sup> *The National Security Strategy of the United States of America*, March 16, 2006, President Bush’s introductory letter, no page number; [www.whitehouse.gov/nsc/nss/2006](http://www.whitehouse.gov/nsc/nss/2006).

<sup>17</sup> QDR, photo caption, p. 37.

<sup>18</sup> QDR, p. 47.

<sup>19</sup> QDR, p. 4.

PLA and the US Department of Defense. As the QDR states, “The aim is to possess sufficient capability to convince any potential adversary that it cannot prevail in a conflict ....” Quite simply, that means that the US intends to rise on the same capabilities tide as China in order to not lose any of the strategic leverage that its predominate military presence off the East Asia littoral has provided since 1945.

For the US Navy, rising on the same tide as the PLA navy means placing a great deal more effort into reestablishing its skills in locating and tracking submarines. When the Cold War ended almost twenty years ago US Navy ASW capability was superb. The end of the Cold War removed the huge Soviet submarine force from the threat category, and as a result over the years the US Navy gradually removed ASW oriented forces from the active inventory and lost focus on ASW training. This shortfall was recognized early in this century when the growth of the Chinese submarine force became an issue. Since that time the USN has been working to restore to the ASW primacy it enjoyed in 1989.

Similarly, the USN has been working to field capabilities to deal with ballistic missiles. The navy has been increasingly successful in fielding a capability that can successfully engage ballistic missiles and is intent on introducing that capability into as many AEGIS equipped cruisers and destroyers as possible. But it is not depending only on hard-kill approaches to the ballistic missile problem. Every element of a ballistic missile engagement sequence is being examined for vulnerabilities. Just as it did during the 1980’s when the Soviet Backfire with long range cruise missiles posed a serious threat, the US Navy is examining the full range of tactical techniques.

## **Conclusion**

As China sits on the cusp of altering the Western Pacific’s strategic balance, the United States Naval and Air forces are 50 to 60 percent fewer than they were at the end of the Cold War. This greatly reduces America’s flexibility in maintaining a strong overseas presence capable of honoring defense commitments and providing regional stability. Sending forces on routine 6 or 8 month rotations is not sustainable over the long term;

forces need to be permanent and on bases in East Asia. Without fixed facilities available in Japan and South Korea, sustaining today's level of American military capability in East Asia would not be possible.

Since 2003, the Bush Administration has attempted to “transform” the U.S. military posture in the Western Pacific and East Asia to better position the US military for the future. In Japan and Korea, this involves significant redeployment of U.S. ground forces and taking actions to reduce frictions associated with the close intermingling of US bases and local populaces. Part of this transformation includes transferring more U.S. forces to the U.S. Territory of Guam. Guam is also be used to introduce additional US capabilities such as submarines and routine bomber deployments to the Asia-Pacific region in order to maintain America's current advantages in the face of growing Chinese maritime power.

As China improves its military capabilities in order to guarantee its security and field a military establishment worthy of a great power it could undermine the existing continental-maritime balance. By gradually improving its anti-access capabilities, albeit largely for strategically defensive purposes, China is beginning to “intrude” into the maritime region that has been the preserve of the United States and its allies for the past half-century. Left unaddressed, this will have the effect of upsetting the decades-old balance of power that has been so successful in preserving stability in the region. By attempting to achieve security on its maritime frontier, Beijing is creating a dynamic that as its security situation improves, is making the security environment for many of its neighbors worse because a central element of its strategy in case of conflict is to keep US power as far away from East Asia as possible. It is unlikely that Washington will allow its strategic position in Asia, which depends upon the ability to use the seas to guarantee the security of our East Asian allies, and pursue American national interests, to be undermined.

In this regard the history of the first half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century is instructive. Over the years between 1905 and 1932 America's efforts to bandwagon with Japan were followed in

succession by trying to constrain, or in today's terminology, shape Japanese behavior through the combination of naval arms limitations agreements and multilateral security guarantee's at the Washington Conference of 1920-21.<sup>20</sup> As it turned out Japan refused to be "shaped" and belated US attempts to arrest Japanese expansion through economic sanctions and the posturing of the main US fleet "forward" in Pearl Harbor as a deterrent also failed to alter Japanese behavior. If there is lesson for today from the last century it would be do not fall behind in a military capability competition with a rising Asian power.

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<sup>20</sup> Erik Goldstein and John Mauer, editors, *The Washington Conference, 1921-22, Naval Rivalry, East Asian Stability and the Road to Pearl Harbor*, Frank Cass, 1994, pp. 250-255.

# PLA Navy's Build-up and ROK-US Naval Cooperation

RADM Jung, Ho-Sub

## I. Introduction

It could be said that the maritime security and order of the Asia-Pacific region have been safely maintained mainly by the power and influence of the world's strongest US Navy.<sup>1</sup> The maritime security of the region, particularly seen in the aspect of US military strategy, holds a great significance. To be specific, the bilateral security alliance system of the region, in which the US plays the pivotal role, is characteristically maritime in nature, connected through seas. Guaranteeing maritime security is thus inseparable from maintaining the bilateral alliance system.

Changes to this situation begin to occur with the rise of China. With rapid developments in economic and military power, China is transforming into a nation capable of massive influence on the security environment of the Asia-Pacific region. In fact, China is becoming No. 2 power, checking the US on the international stage and continues to seek an expansion of its influence. Concerns remain about China's uncertain future, the possibility of Chinese military, particularly naval build-up, being recognized as a challenging factor to

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<sup>1</sup> To date, even China has enjoyed a free ride on the US Navy's global SLOC security guarantee. Andrew S. Erickson and Gabriel Collins, "China's Maritime Evolution: Military and Commercial Factors", *Pacific Focus*, Vol. 22, No. 2 (Fall 2007), p. 58.

the maritime supremacy of the US Navy, which has so long been maintaining regional maritime security and order. Also, troubles could be amplified because of various disputes of territory and territorial waters China involves with other major countries in the region.<sup>2</sup>

Therefore, it is no exaggeration to say that the future of the region depends on, of all things, how well China and the US cope with the fundamental shifts in the balance of power and how China-US relationship adjusts and changes. Furthermore, it could be seen that the fate of regional order and bilateral security alliance system rests also with this balance of power.<sup>3</sup>

In the meantime, ROK-US alliance system is also undergoing a fundamental change. Above all, wartime operational control(hereafter OPCON) of ROK military forces is to transfer from the US to ROK as of April 17th, 2012. In a framework of new alliance system known as the Common Defense System, ROK military must initiatively resolve Korea's defense problem away from the hitherto ROK-US Combined Defense System to which they have held on up to now. Also, with the advent of a new administration in Seoul, ROK-US alliance

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<sup>2</sup> See, Office of the Secretary of Defense, *Military Power of the People's Republic of China 2008*, Annual Report to Congress (Washington D.C.: Government Printing Office, 2008), p. 11.

<sup>3</sup> G. John Ikenberry, Chung-In Moon, Mitchell Reiss, *The Search for a Common Strategic Vision: Charting the Future of the US-ROK Security Partnership*, A Report of the US-ROK Strategic Forum, Feb. 14, 2008, The College of William and Mary, The Institute for Korean Unification Studies at Yonsei Univ., The East Asia Foundation, p. 5.

system is at a new turning point. At a ROK-US summit in April, 2008, the two nations reached an agreement to establish a '21st century strategic alliance.'<sup>4</sup>

The transfer of wartime OPCON and establishment of a 21st century strategic alliance will require ROK to make more contribution to world peace and regional security, and to take actions alongside the US. On the other hand, they imply the function of the ROK-US alliance and the role of United States Forces Korea(USFK), previously limited to the Korean peninsula as a deterrent to North Korean aggression, may be expanded out of the area, significantly improving strategic flexibility.

It is an extremely important question for not only ROK and the US but also regional security how to accommodate ROK-US alliance properly to the rapidly changing regional security environment. Particularly, given a new ROK-US Common Defense System, the cooperation system between ROK and US Navy may be an essential element that not only deters North Korea's provocation but also carries out core role of the 21st century ROK-US strategic alliance such as joint response on regional maritime security and humanitarian support in case of large-scale natural disasters. The theme of this thesis is: given the ever-growing PLA's naval power, how could the ROK-US Navy cooperation system be desirably established ?

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<sup>4</sup> 『Kookbang Journal (*National Defense Journal*)』 (2008, May), p. 14-6. This was reconfirmed at the ROK-US summit held in Seoul in August, 2008.



## **II. PLA Navy's Build-up: Its Background and Focus**

To approach this topic effectively, it is necessary first to examine the background of the PLA Navy(hereafter PLAN)'s build-up and the focus on force augmentation.

### **1. Background of PLA Navy's Build-up**

The background of the PLAN's build-up could be explained by a variety of factors, but the following three are most prominent. First, for the readiness in case of contingencies in the Taiwan Strait; secondly, as a means to protect and expand Chinese maritime interests such as oil supply route and maritime resources<sup>5</sup>; lastly, US-China strategic rivalry in East Asia. Professor Kim, Tae-Ho, Hallym Institute of Advanced International Studies, provides proper explanation for the relationship between China's national strategy and rise of PLAN's power as below:

"The core of sovereignty and strategic problems" that Chinese leaders and strategists view possesses maritime characteristics. The most typical example is the Taiwanese contingency, which fundamentally assumes an intervention of US Navy besides Taiwan's defense readiness; accordingly,

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<sup>5</sup> On this theme, see Andrew S. Erickson and Gabriel Collins, "China's Maritime Evolution: Military and Commercial Factors," pp. 47-75.

capability for effective maritime operation, that is, command of the sea and amphibious warfare, is essential under the support of the Air Force.

Moreover, the southeast coastal area of China is not only densely populated but is the center of economic development, depending fundamentally on naval power for protection. Furthermore, China is involved in disputes of territory and territorial waters with neighboring countries on the Spratly Islands and East China Sea, that all deal with the maritime sovereignty issues. Maritime interests hold an important position in the China's military strategy due to China's particularly high trade dependency (76%, 2007) and necessity for energy security.

In the medium and long-term perspective, those countries that may challenge Chinese regional maritime interests like the US, Japan, and Taiwan are all armed with modernized naval capabilities. China needs to develop robust readiness to deal with these powers.<sup>6</sup>

To be more specific, first of all, many view that the strongest and most direct driver for on-going PLAN's build-up is for the readiness in case of

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<sup>6</sup> Kim, Tae Ho, "China's Maritime Strategy and Its Naval Modernization: with a Focus on Its 'Anti-Access' Strategy," 『Strategy 21』 No. 21 (Spring-Summer 2008), p. 183. (my translation)

contingencies in the Taiwan Strait.<sup>7</sup> In case of occurrence of Taiwanese emergency, Chinese invasion of Taiwan, air supremacy, command of the sea, and amphibious warfare capability are required fundamentally in order to effectively neutralize Taiwanese defense. Also, a large-scale commitment of ground troops is required with the support of the Air Force in order to occupy Taiwan. In doing so, build-up of naval capabilities, to include maritime transportation vehicles and major warships for convoy, should be preceded. Most importantly, assuming estimated US military intervention with formidable naval power and Taiwan's modernized naval capabilities, the necessity for PLAN's build-up seems obvious.<sup>8</sup>

Secondly, PLAN's build-up is required for the protection of Chinese maritime interests. Above all, China possesses a vast sea spaces including 18,000 km-long shoreline, numerous islands, territorial waters and exclusive economic zone. China is also involved in many disputes with neighboring countries on territorial rights to islands and maritime demarcation problems in many places such as the Yellow Sea, Diaoyutai(Senkaku in Japanese) Islands in East China Sea, and the Spratly Islands and Paracel Islands in South China Sea. PLAN's build-up is also required for the protection of economically

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<sup>7</sup> *Military Power of the People's Republic of China 2008*, p. 15.

<sup>8</sup> Kim, Tae Ho, "China's Maritime Strategy and Its Naval Modernization: with a Focus on Its 'Anti-Access' Strategy," p. 185.

important coastal areas and the expansion of strategic defense in depth. As ranked second to the US in oil consumption in the world, China needs to continuously secure and protect maritime resources including maritime oil fields and natural gas.

Moreover, China's prosperity and economic development depend on the safety of sea lines of communication(SLOCs); for instance, 76% of Chinese GDP in 2007 was dependent on foreign trade(goods and service). Also as the third largest importer of oil in the world, China currently imports over 53% of its oil (around 4.04 million barrels per day in the first three quarters of 2007), with the vast majority coming by ship and transiting through the Malacca or Lombok/Makkasar straits.<sup>9</sup> From the Chinese point of view, necessity for naval build-up as protective measures to safeguard such maritime rights is growing day after day.

Furthermore, China acknowledges that constructing capable naval power, especially nuclear powered submarine forces, is essential to secure its

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<sup>9</sup> *Military Power of the People's Republic of China 2008*, p. 10. China's 2006 Defense White Paper states explicitly in its description of the security environment that "security issues related to energy resources, finance, information and international shipping routes are mounting." 『2006 年中國的國防(China's 2006 Defense White Paper)』(北京: 國務院, 2006), p. 3. For more, see Zhiguo Gao, "China's Strategy on the Security of SLOC in East Asia", Korea Institute for Maritime Strategy(ed.), *The Security of the Sea Lanes of Communications in East Asia* (Seoul: KIMS, 2007), pp. 463-81.

status as a great power and one of the permanent member states in the UN Security Council.<sup>10</sup>

Lastly but not in the least, one of the backgrounds for PLAN's build-up could be found in China-US rivalry in East Asia. In other words, to deal with the Hedging Strategy<sup>11</sup>, which the US seeks to use to respond to the rising "Chinese threat," China is containing the only superpower, the US, by expanding its strategic defense in depth through building up military power, particularly naval power, at the same time, by establishing strategic partnership through conducting a large-scale combined arms training with Russia.<sup>12</sup>

Some view that PLAN's build-up is for an ultimate challenge to maritime supremacy of the US within the area and for the purpose of maritime control

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<sup>10</sup> Andrew S. Erickson and Lyle J. Goldstein, "China's Future Nuclear Submarine Force: Insights from Chinese Writings," *Naval War College Review* (Winter 2007), p. 63.

<sup>11</sup> The core of the so-called Hedging Strategy is to respond to China whose latest nuclear and conventional forces, particularly naval power, display rapid expansion, by building up US military power within the region and by strengthening its alliance system. The US, by accepting "Joint Security Declaration" with Japan and Australia recently, created a new tripartite alliance, and now India is trying to join it. Korea Institute of Strategic Problems, 『Dongbuka chunryakgyunhyung 2007 (Strategic Balance in Northeast Asia 2007)』 (Seoul, Korea Institute of Strategic Problems, 2007), pp. 3-10.

<sup>12</sup> Since executing "Peace Mission-2005" training, in which both Chinese and Russian ground, sea, and air forces participated, for the first time in 2005 under the name of counter-terrorism, the two countries continue to conduct combined training against the US and NATO by executing "Peace Mission-2007" training, in which six Shanghai Cooperation Organization(SCO) member-states participated, in August, 2007. *Military Power of the People's Republic of China 2008*, p. 6. Meanwhile, on July 21, 2008, China and Russia flaunted their close relationship by coming to terms based on agreement with border conflict in the Amur basin that has been dragged for last 40 years. <http://www.onbao.com/dongbook/Article/2008/07/22/19077.htm>

(seeking supremacy at East China Sea) over West Pacific Ocean and Indian Ocean in the long run. Considering an estimate by Office of the US Secretary of Defense that currently China is neither capable of using military power to secure its foreign energy investment nor of defending critical sea lanes against disruption<sup>13</sup>, it seems an overstatement of "China as a threat".

When assessed comprehensively, after all, the background for PLAN's build-up is to be ready for contingencies in the Taiwan strait, and to protect and expand its maritime interests. By doing so, it seems that China ultimately plans to have readiness toward competition with the US by constructing a "blue-water navy" that matches its national power and status.

## **2. Force Development Focus**

Then, where is PLAN's build-up leading its focus to ? China's 2006 Defense White Paper comments on PLA's modernization and military power build-up as follows:

China pursues a three-step development strategy in modernizing its national defense. The first step is to lay a solid foundation by 2010, the second is to make major progress around 2020, and the third is to basically reach the strategic

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<sup>13</sup> *Military Power of the People's Republic of China 2008*, p. 13. Also, Andrew S. Erickson and Gabriel Collins, "China's Maritime Evolution: Military and Commercial Factors", p. 54.

goal of building informatized armed forces and being capable of winning informatized wars by the mid-21st century.

In conducting military strategy of "active defense," in particular, PLA sets winning local wars under conditions of informatization and raising national sovereignty, security, and development interests as a goal to be fully ready for military conflicts.....the Navy is promoting to gradually expand strategic depth of "Offshore Defense Strategy" and to enhance integrated maritime operational capability and nuclear counter-attack capability.<sup>14</sup>

Until now, PLAN's build-up has been chiefly focused on preparing for Taiwan strait contingencies. Taiwanese emergency requires not only focused "joint operations" capabilities such as missile attack, air and naval battle in the Straits of Taiwan, but also force projection capability from great distances and operational sustainability at much higher levels such as ocean surveillance/reconnaissance capability, area denial capability for broader waters, and remote strike capability.<sup>15</sup> In other words, the focus of PLAN's

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<sup>14</sup> ROK Defense Intelligence Agency (trans.), 『2006 Chinese Defense White Paper』 (Seoul: Defense Intelligence Agency, 2007), pp. 75-76.

<sup>15</sup> Kim, Tae Ho, "China's Maritime Strategy and Its Naval Modernization: with a Focus on Its 'Anti-Access' Strategy," p. 185.

modernization is to reinforce anti-access/area denial capabilities such as SSN/SS, remote anti-ship missile, and mine laying capability required to interdict or deny US intervention in case of Taiwan strait contingencies.

As a key component of its area denial strategy at sea, PLAN is acquiring various surface combatants armed with anti-ship cruise missile (ASCM). It operates 4 Sovremennyy class guided missile destroyers(DDG) fitted with SS-N-22/Sunburn supersonic ASCM, acquired from Russia. It has also received domestically produced surface combatants, including Luyang I-II class DDGs fitted with the indigenous HHQ-9 long-range surface to air missile(SAM). In addition, PLAN is running 12 Russian-built Kilo-class diesel electric submarines of which 8 boats are fitted with the SS-N-27B/Sizzler supersonic ASCM. Furthermore, China is also working on a new submarine-launched ballistic missile, the JL-2, for deployment aboard new Jin-class(type 094) nuclear-powered ballistic missile submarines (SSBN).<sup>16</sup>

For anti-access/area denial capabilities, PLAN is making utmost efforts, in particular, on reinforcing nuclear powered submarine forces.<sup>17</sup> Nuclear powered submarine symbolizes national power and status and is considered as the cornerstone of a genuine blue-water navy. As a highly survivable nuclear

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<sup>16</sup> The JL-2 is expected to reach initial operational capability(IOC) between 2009-2010. *Military Power of the People's Republic of China 2008*, pp. 2-3.

<sup>17</sup> On this topic, refer to Andrew S. Erickson and Lyle J. Goldstein, "China's Future Nuclear Submarine Force: Insights from Chinese Writings," pp. 54-79.



deterrent force of the nation in case of emergency, Ballistic Missile Submarine(SSBN) plays a chief role of deterring US Navy's intervention in case of Taiwan strait contingencies, and SSN protects China's shipping lanes in distant seas with remote operational capability, attacks enemy's SLOC when necessary, and establishes maritime control in China's coastal areas or neighboring seas.

In particular, PLAN seems to reckon submarine forces as the only forces that can respond to US Navy's Carrier Strike Group(CSG) in the absence of sufficient air cover in case of Taiwan strait contingencies. Reportedly, it is a Chinese plan to make a large-scale simultaneous infiltration into CSG's self defense network by numerous submarines, then multiwave saturation attack, and defeat it.<sup>18</sup> For this, PLAN is known to be operating numerous submarines including new vessels of Type 094 SSBN and Type 093 SSN and 12 vessels of Kilo-class Russian submarine.<sup>19</sup>

China's active build-up of submarine forces is stimulating US Navy to facilitate reinforcement of Anti-Submarine Warfare(ASW) forces that have been weakened since the end of the Cold-war. At the same time, there existed some

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<sup>18</sup> *The Washington Times*, July 16, 2004 and December 3, 2004.

<sup>19</sup> According to *Military Balance 2008*, China is currently operating 62 vessels of submarine (1 Xia-class, 2 Jin-class, 4 Han-class, 2 Shang-class, 1 improved Romeo-class, 12 Kilo-class, 19 Ming-class, 8 Romeo-class, 2 Yuan-class and 1 Golf-class), and despite the outworn condition of Romeo-class submarines, it is interpreted that PLAN is still operating them as "false target or bait" and means of mine laying. IISS, *The Military Balance 2008* (London: IISS, 2008), pp. 377-8.

concerns that China might dominate Asian coasts unless the US builds less expensive diesel submarines to contain Chinese ones.<sup>20</sup> It is also pointed out that PLAN is unquestionably promoting to acquire forces more than enough to prepare for some contingencies in the Taiwan strait, considering China's recent military modernization, especially range, speed, and level of nuclear powered submarine forces build-up.<sup>21</sup>

In addition to submarines, China sees sea mine laying capabilities important as a means for anti-access/area denial strategy that blocks anticipated intervention of US Navy in case of Taiwan contingencies.<sup>22</sup> Mines seem to be operated by PLAN, presumably, for the following two purposes. Firstly, it is used to blockade Taiwan in case of Taiwan strait contingencies. The Strait of Taiwan as well as waters to the immediate north and south, adjacent to the island's largest ports, are shallow enough to create an environment for the use of all types of mines. Some in PLAN believe that by relying on a

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<sup>20</sup> *The Washington Times*, July 16, 2004 and December 3, 2004.

<sup>21</sup> Kim, Tae Ho, "China's Maritime Strategy and Its Naval Modernization: with a Focus on Its 'Anti-Access' Strategy," p. 183. Erickson and Goldstein see that China's build-up route for nuclear powered submarine would be the single best index showing whether China is ambitious to be a genuine global military power or not. Andrew S. Erickson and Lyle J. Goldstein, "China's Future Nuclear Submarine Force: Insights from Chinese Writings", p. 71.

<sup>22</sup> China reportedly has between 50,000 and 100,000 mines, consisting of over 30 varieties of contact, magnetic, acoustic, water pressure and mixed reaction sea mines, remote control, rocket-rising, and mobile mines. Andrew Erickson, Lyle Goldstein, and William Murray, "Sea Mines Constitute Key Element of PLA Navy's ASW," *Undersea Warfare* (Winter 2007), p. 11-15.

combination method of deployment, air, surface, submarine and civilian, PLAN could effectively blockade Taiwan.<sup>23</sup>

Secondly, mine is an important element of PLAN's ASW against US Navy's nuclear powered submarines. China does not yet possess a proper means to deal with US nuclear powered submarines, extremely quiet and difficult to counter. Submarines are very vulnerable to mines, however. Mine laying by submarines, in particular, is optimal for offensive, especially remote mine laying operations, and it can prevent adversary submarines from getting out to the ocean by laying mines covertly in the egress route approximate to the enemy's bases. Furthermore, PLAN seems to believe that US Navy's mine warfare capabilities are extremely weak, relative to other combat mission areas.<sup>24</sup> Chinese Navy is ultimately promoting to secure an ability to lay mines in every strait of the First Chain of Islands in the Pacific Ocean.<sup>25</sup> By doing so, a blockade line that prevents US nuclear powered submarines from entering sea areas adjacent to China can be created.

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<sup>23</sup> *ibid.*, p. 14.

<sup>24</sup> The US Navy has a very limited mine-clearing capability, and, except for two small ships located in Japan, these ships and helicopters could not arrive in the Taiwan area without significant delay. Bernard D. Cole, *The Great Wall at Sea: China's Navy Enters the Twenty-First Century* (Annapolis, Maryland: Naval Institute Press, 2001), p. 157.

<sup>25</sup> Erickson, Goldstein, and Murray, "Sea Mines Constitute Key Element of PLA Navy's ASW," p. 15.

This is the main incentive for PLAN to enhance mine laying capabilities. It seems that PLAN sees mine warfare as a feasible "poor man's ASW"<sup>26</sup>, providing stopgap measure until China establishes a more powerful ASW capability, air, surface and sub-surface, into place.

As examined above, it could be seen that PLAN's build-up is focused on expanding China's own strategic defense in depth, at the same time, establishing capabilities, through anti-access and area denial forces, to keep US naval forces, especially aircraft carriers, from coming Taiwan's aid in case of Taiwan strait contingencies, and, ultimately in the long run, constructing a blue-water navy, concomitant with its national power and status, in preparation for China-US strategic rivalry.

### **3. Influence of PLAN Build-up**

How, then, would PLAN build-up influence on ROK and regional maritime security ? This depends on, among others, which foreign policy China would pursue. In fact, there are a growing concern about the rise of China in the region. China currently favors a stable international situation in which it can sustain rapid development of its economy, the source of its power.<sup>27</sup> The basic

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<sup>26</sup> *ibid.*, p. 12.

<sup>27</sup> At the 17th Chinese Communist Party Congress on October 15–21, 2007, President of PRC and CCP General Secretary Hu Jintao reaffirmed a long-term strategy of opening and development. *Military Power of the People's Republic of China 2008*, p. 1.

line of national policy of China is usually expressed as Tao Guang Yong Hui(韜光養晦: hiding its capacities and bide its time).

Accordingly, there does not seem a major impact from the PLAN's build-up in the short run. Moreover, although PLAN is rapidly modernizing and expanding its forces, they are still several decades behind those of US Navy quantitatively as well as qualitatively. It is the dominant view that PLAN will not reach to a level to be able to challenge US Navy's regional maritime supremacy in the near future.

In the medium-term and long-term, however, PLAN build-up may become a grave challenge to the international society as well as Asia-Pacific region, particularly if it combines with strong exclusive nationalism, when major changes in military balances occur in the region.<sup>28</sup> In a bid to expand its own power and influence, capitalizing on the continued naval build-up, China might endanger regional maritime security and disturb the safety of main SLOCs by raising tension in the Straits of Taiwan, and resorting to forces in territorial disputes or sea district demarcation problems. Ultimately, China may challenge US Navy's regional maritime supremacy. In order to prepare for this, continuous

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<sup>28</sup> According to US Office of the Secretary of Defense, examples of such changes include disruptions on the Korean peninsula (e.g., a North Korean collapse), democratic revolutions in Central Asia which would represent both near-term and long-term security challenges for Beijing, a downturn in relations with Japan leading to greater mistrust, or perceived threats to China's ability to access foreign resources and transport them back to China. *Military Power of the People's Republic of China 2008*, pp. 15, 29.

observation on PLAN build-up and if necessary, establishment of a robust readiness posture is needed.

On the other hand, ROK must stay alert of the rapidly growing China's military, especially naval capabilities due to the following three reasons. Firstly, there are some different views between ROK and China, on sea district demarcation problems such as territorial waters and exclusive economic zone. And potential factors for maritime conflict exist in territorial rights conflicts on leodo, an underwater islet in the Yellow sea, and its neighboring sea areas. Secondly, the operational radius of ROK Navy and PLAN overlaps in many areas of the Yellow Sea and East China Sea, leaving possibilities of military contingencies at sea (especially submarine operations). Finally but not the least, PLAN can be an obstacle to the process of reunification of the Korean peninsula. In case of emergency on the Korean peninsula, it is usually predicted that Chinese military will interfere, according to the North Korea-China Mutual Support Treaty signed in 1961. If the submarine forces and mine laying capability, the core of PLAN's anti-access and area denial forces, are utilized<sup>29</sup>, the ROK-US Combined Forces' theater campaign could not be conducted properly. In addition, in case of some contingencies in North Korea, China's role could be a decisive factor in the reunification process of the Korean peninsula. It

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<sup>29</sup> Erickson, Goldstein, and Murray, "Sea Mines Constitute Key Element of PLA Navy's ASW," p. 14.

seems that China would almost certainly try to intervene to sustain North Korea as a buffer zone.

Then, what measures should ROK take to cope with PLAN's build-up ?

There should not be a problem logically if China sticks to the current policy of opening and development for the economic growth, that is Tao Guang Yong Hui, as a national long-term policy. In that case, ROK should lead China to be a responsible stakeholder of the international community by pursuing the strategic cooperative partnership which both countries agreed to build, and improve mutual trust and bilateral ties by enhancing exchange and cooperation between ROK Navy and PLAN. However, in case China tries to change its current line of policy and to attempt to maximize its power and influence in the region, ROK should focus on naval build-up while establishing a joint response system to the Chinese policy change, on the basis of the ROK-US alliance. Here exists a dilemma for ROK.

### **III. ROK-US Alliance vs. ROK-China Partnership**

The dilemma exists between two needs. One is the need to further develop the ROK-US alliance, the main pillar of the defense and security of ROK for the last 55 years, in ways to be able to contribute to world peace and regional security, and, at the same time, to jointly cope with the rise of China in

the 21st century. The other is the need to establish a strategic (cooperative) partnership with China. China is a geopolitical neighbor and the largest trading partner of ROK, and a key holder to the reunification of the Korean peninsula as well as to the maintenance of the stability of the region as a whole.

### **1. Establishment of a 21st Century ROK-US Strategic Alliance**

The first thing for ROK to prepare for China's sudden change in foreign policy, combined with the continued naval build-up, is to reinforce the ROK-US alliance. As a matter of fact, the US is a country which has the greatest impact on China's foreign policy changes. The ROK-US alliance is currently undergoing a series of fundamental changes. As mentioned above, wartime OPCON of ROK military forces is to be transferred from the US to ROK effective on 17 April 2012. This transition of OPCON necessitates a process of 'Koreanization of Korean defense,' with the ROK military taking the lead and the US shifting to a supporting role for the defense of ROK.

With the transition of wartime OPCON, the current 'two-nations, one-command' system shifts to a new 'two-nations, two-commands' one. To be more specific, the current combined defense system is centering on the ROK-US Combined Forces Command(CFC), founded in 1978. The new common defense system will be composed of two independent and complementary commands, ROK Joint Forces Command and US Korea Command. In terms of



command relations structure, new common defense system becomes more loose cooperation system with the existing mandatory cooperation between the two nations shifting toward a more selective one. Especially, force augmentation from the US will be more dependent upon situations rather than institutional cooperation. Therefore, it involves more political decision-making process.<sup>30</sup> In other words, the ROK-US alliance system, at a strategic level, might weaken especially when it should be reinforced in the face of the rise of China.

On the other hand, ROK and the US agreed to establish 'a 21st century strategic alliance' during a summit meeting in April 2008. By building a strategic alliance, the current military alliance between the two countries develops into a multi-layered and comprehensive one, covering the fields of society, economy, culture, and value. The mission of the mutual defense treaty, currently limited to

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<sup>30</sup> A comment made by Dr. Lee, Sanghyun, a research fellow at Sejong Research Institution, on Kim, Sunghan, "Transfer of Wartime OPCON and Tasks for the ROK-US Alliance," in Korea Institute of Maritime Strategy (ed.), 『Hanbando Chubyunkook Chungsewa Hankookeui Anchunbochang (*Situations of the Nations surrounding the Korean Peninsula and ROK's Security*)』 (Seoul: KIMS, 2008), pp. 279-80. Addressing this concern, US Defense Secretary Gates offered firm assurance that the transition of wartime OPCON will be carried out in a manner that strengthens deterrence and maintains a fully capable US-ROK combined defense posture on the peninsula, noting that the US remains committed, both now and into the future, to respond quickly with appropriate military power to restore peace and stability to the peninsula. The Secretary reaffirmed that the US will continue to provide significant bridging capabilities until the ROK obtains full self-defense capabilities. He further noted that the US will continue to contribute US unique capabilities to the combined defense for the life of the alliance. Department of Defense, *Joint Communique, the 40th US-ROK Security Consultative Meeting*, Oct. 17, 2008, Washington, D.C., p. 4.

the Korean peninsula, includes cooperations for multilateral order in Northeast Asia and international security.<sup>31</sup> In other words, the ROK-US alliance should not only manage North Korea issues, but also become a multi-tasking entity, sharing a strategic vision for global or regional issues, and dealing with traditional and new transnational threats or regional challenging factors such as proliferation of WMD and piracy.<sup>32</sup>

In particular, an establishment of 21st century strategic alliance has a great significance in ROK-US joint response to the rise of China. Michael Green, a former senior director for Asian affairs at the US National Security Council, discussed the strategic significance of ROK in relation to the emergence of China as follows:

The worst case scenario for the future of Asia's security is that China becomes a hegemony and conflicts arise between continental and maritime powers in the region.

Roh Moo-Hyun, former President of ROK, used the notion of a "balancer", pressuring the US in order to maintain a more neutral position between China and Japan. However, the idea of ROK to change the ROK-US alliance to be a balancer

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<sup>31</sup> 『Kookbang Journal(Defense Journal)』 (Seoul: Ministry of National Defense, May 2008), pp. 14-6. This was reaffirmed in the Seoul summit meeting in August 2008.

<sup>32</sup> Ikenberry, Moon, and Reiss, *The Search for a Common Strategic Vision: Charting the Future of the US-ROK Security Partnership*, p. 3.

between China and Japan will not only make the US skeptical about the alliance itself, but also give China a false impression that it can isolate ROK from the alliance by acting independently. A desirable way to maintain the stable regional order in Asia is to make China consider the ROK-US alliance as an invariable factor for regional order.<sup>33</sup>

This is to say, ROK and the US should continuously reinforce the bilateral alliance so that China would regard it not a threat, but an invariable factor which has contributed to peace on the Korean peninsula as well as to regional stability for the past 55 years. In order to achieve this goal, a '21st century strategic alliance' to which both ROK and the US aspire should be well established with careful management of the alliance transformation and closer policy coordination for global and regional issues between the two countries even after the transition of the wartime OPCON. With this effort, China can not easily alienate ROK from the US.

However, if China or North Korea senses a weakening ROK-US alliance in turmoil after the wartime OPCON transfer, it will be a grave threat to the very existence of the alliance.

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<sup>33</sup> Michael Green, "Reestablishing the Notion of the ROK-US Alliance," *The Joongang Daily*, September 12 2008, p. 26.(my translation)

On the other hand, wartime OPCON transfer and the establishment of a 21st century strategic alliance, from ROK's point of view, may raise two opposite concerns which typically appear in the alliance relationship between major and small countries. First of all, it is a concern that the US gradually abandons its role in the defense of ROK because of transfer of the wartime OPCON. The other is a concern that ROK might be entrapped in an unwanted international conflict due to the establishment of a 21st century strategic alliance with the US.<sup>34</sup> In order to eradicate these concerns, therefore, ROK and the US should share a basic understanding, in the process of building of a new common defense system, that the alliance is indispensable for the security of ROK, and that the 21st century strategic alliance must contribute to the peace and stability in the Asia-Pacific region.

Especially ROK and the US Navy should develop a common strategic vision on security situations on the Korean peninsula as well as in the region, and must promote closer coordinations at policy and strategic level. In addition, the principle and philosophy that the two navies, with more enhanced cooperations, will jointly manage provocative threat from North Korea, cope with unlawful actions such as international terrorism and piracy at sea, and deal with safety matters on SLOCs and massive natural disasters, should be reflected in

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<sup>34</sup> kenberry, Moon, and Reiss, *The Search for a Common Strategic Vision: Charting the Future of the US-ROK Security Partnership*, p. 18.

the process of establishing a new ROK-US Navy common operation system after the transfer of wartime OPCON. In particular, ROK and US Navy must begin to work on the details of action plans which can contribute to the maritime security and order in the region. Through this effort, both countries can effectively cope with the negative effects of PLAN's build-up on the regional security. Therefore, strengthening the ROK-US naval cooperation is a starting point in establishing a 21st century ROK-US strategic alliance.

## **2. ROK-China Strategic Partnership**

While efforts to expand the function and strengthen the role of the ROK-US alliance are essential, it is also important for ROK to pursue a balanced strategy which does not neglect relations with China. There are several reasons to do so. First, China, the closest neighbor to ROK in terms of geography, history, and culture, has maintained a good relationship with ROK as a key political, economic and cultural partner. Trade between ROK and China exceeds 160 billion dollars annually with more than 6 million people visiting each other.<sup>35</sup>

Secondly, as mentioned before, China can interrupt the operations of the ROK-US combined forces in case of an emergency on the Korean

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<sup>35</sup> Lee, Hee-Ok, "Current Status of the ROK-China Strategic Relationship," *The Joongang Daily*, September 5, 2008, p. 31. China is the largest trading as well as personnel exchange partner of ROK.

peninsula, based on the North Korea-China Mutual Support Treaty in 1961. Also, China still exercises much political influence on North Korea. China has been leading the 6 party talks to resolve the nuclear issue of North Korea. China is also supporting the survival of the North Korean regime through a massive economic, in particular, energy and food, aid program. With such leverage capable of leading North Korea towards a positive way, China's influence is increasing even more because of its decisive role in the course of reunification of the two Koreas.

Thirdly, from the viewpoint of China, the ROK-US alliance might be seen as a core ring of the anti-China blockade of the US. China might be concerned whether ROK joins the anti-China bloc led by the US because of the 21st century strategic alliance between ROK and the US.

Furthermore, China might fear that ROK and the US will jointly intervene in such regional conflicts as the Taiwan strait contingencies. In the regular briefing right before the summit between ROK President Lee and Chinese President Hu Jintao on May 27, 2008, Chinese Foreign Ministry spokesman, Qin Gang said that "Since the ROK-US alliance is a relict of the past history, it is inadequate to cope with the urgent global or regional problems through a military alliance formed in the Cold war era because time has changed and circumstances of each country in Northeast Asia have also changed."<sup>36</sup>

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<sup>36</sup> *The Dong-a Daily*, May 28, 2008.

This is to say that ROK needs to ease concerns of China over the strengthening the ROK-US alliance, and to further develop a bilateral relationship with China, increasing mutual cooperation in all areas, such as politics, economy, military and culture. By doing so, ROK can settle North Korean nuclear issues peacefully and, at the same time, establish a foundation for the peaceful reunification of the Korean peninsula. This is also a way to encourage China to play a more positive role, as a responsible stakeholder of the international community. The end state of ROK's China policy is to make a China friendly to ROK and, at the same time, cooperative towards the ROK-US alliance. Against these background, both presidents of the two countries agreed on 27 May 2008 to promote the ROK-China relations to a 'strategic cooperative partnership.'<sup>37</sup>

### **3. A Balanced Strategy for Win-Win**

After all, in order to resolve the dilemma between these two bilateral relations, ROK should put its efforts to further solidify the ROK-US alliance to

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<sup>37</sup> It is difficult to find the exact definition of a strategic cooperative partnership. It is known to be the highest diplomatic relations in which two countries extend their bilateral relations, centered on economic cooperation, to diplomatic and security talks, and increase human resources and cultural exchange. See Kim, Hongkyu, "A Formation of ROK-China Strategic Cooperative Partnership and ROK-China Relationship", 『Juyo kookchemunche bunseok』 (*Analysis on Major International Issues*), Institute of Foreign Affairs & National Security, June 12, 2008, pp. 5-6. In addition, the leaders of ROK and China agreed during the Seoul summit on 25 August 2008 to boost defense ties, including exchange visits by senior defense and military officials and exchange of military observer to each other's training exercises in bids to help build mutual trust. "S. Korea Seeks Closer Military Ties with China," *Defense News*, September 1, 2008, p. 28.

contribute to world peace and regional stability while continuously promoting the strategic cooperative partnership with China in all aspects of politics, economy and military. In short, ROK must be loyal to its alliance with the US, but, at the same time, it has to be extremely careful not to endanger its relations with China.

From now on, ROK must figure out how to extend the common denominator of the ROK-US and ROK-China relations, thereby establishing the structure in a win-win circle<sup>38</sup>, and how to develop these two bilateral relations not into a zero-sum game, but into a positive-sum game under the assumption that strengthening the ROK-US alliance and ROK-China partnership can stand together.<sup>39</sup> For this reason, the harmony between the ROK-US alliance and ROK-China partnership is considered the most important challenge in ROK security strategy in the years to come.<sup>40</sup>

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<sup>38</sup> Alexander Vershbow, former US Ambassador to ROK, mentioned that it is old-fashioned to regard the ROK-US and ROK-China relations as a competition or zero-sum game. *The JoongAng Daily*, September 4, 2008, p. 6.

<sup>39</sup> Kim, Sunghan, "Transfer of Wartime OPCON and Tasks for the ROK-US Alliance," in Korea Institute of Maritime Strategy (ed.), 『Hanbando Chubyunkook Chungsewa Hankookeui Anchunbochang (*Situations of the Nations surrounding the Korean Peninsula and ROK's Security*)』, p. 261.

<sup>40</sup> Kim, Tae-ho, *China's South and North Korea Strategy*, in Korea Institute of Maritime Strategy (ed.), 『Hanbando Chubyunkook Chungsewa Hankookeui Anchunbochang (*Situations of the Nations surrounding the Korean Peninsula and ROK's Security*)』, p. 51.



In the meantime, it might be desirable, from the military perspective, for ROK to promote both cooperation and checking strategies for China policy. As a sovereign state, ROK should promote more direct exchanges with China. However, ROK should establish a robust combined military readiness posture based on the ROK-US alliance in case China promotes an expansionist policy or takes adverse course of action in the process of reunification of the Korean peninsula. In short, ROK and the US should make clear their intentions to prevent China from taking an antagonistic approach towards the alliance, and, at the same time, prepare properly in case some contingencies inevitably occur.

#### **IV. Ways for Future ROK-US Naval Cooperations**

To summarize, future cooperations between ROK and US Navy will need to focus on the following three areas. First, ROK and US Navy should demonstrate the robustness of the ROK-US combined defense posture in order to prevent China from taking an antagonistic approach towards the ROK-US alliance. Secondly, a new ROK-US naval common operations system should be firmly established in order to discourage China from trying to estrange the ROK-US alliance. Finally, ROK and US Navy must jointly strive to engage PLAN in efforts for the regional maritime security.

In detail, ROK and US Navy should demonstrate the robustness of the ROK-US combined defense posture, through reinforced ROK-US combined naval

exercises or training in order to deter and dissuade China from undertaking a militaristic adventure. From the strategic point of view, the ROK-US military alliance system gives the US an accessibility to the Yellow Sea, a place of strategic importance to China. This accessibility can be a useful tool for the US to strategically pressure China. If US-China relations deteriorate into a crisis, the US can put strategic pressure along the Chinese shores starting from the Yellow Sea.<sup>41</sup> Through this strategic pressure, the US can achieve a strategic superiority, enhance the deterrence capability, and accomplish the coercive effects against China without risking military conflicts.

Accordingly, ROK and US Navy can demonstrate their strong combined readiness posture through regular combined training and exercises, especially at the Yellow Sea. In consideration that PLAN build-up is mainly focused on the anti-access and regional denial forces such as submarines and mines, ASWEX, SHAREM (Ship ASW Readiness and Effectiveness Measuring), and MINEX (Mine Exercise) at the Yellow Sea can be good examples in point. These exercises can be more effective deterrents when they are opened to Chinese audiences. Since they can unduly provoke China, of course, they should be consulted in advance between ROK and the US Navy and promoted in a delicate manner, at a right time and place of choosing to obtain desired effects.

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<sup>41</sup> For historical analysis on the strategic use of sea power in war, the author recommends Colin S. Gray, *The Leverage of Sea Power: The Strategic Advantage of Navies in War* (New York: The Free Press, 1992).

Through these reinforced combined training and exercises, ROK and US Navy can have thorough knowledge of and become proficient in the joint operational environment, and furthermore, firmly establish their combined presence and function at the Yellow Sea as well as in the East China Sea. A claim can be derived in this context that future ROK-US alliance will be a valuable strategic asset for the US, greatly enhancing the geo-strategic status of the US vis-a-vis China.

Secondly, ROK and US Navy should firmly establish a new common operations system in order to prevent China from independently trying to isolate ROK and estranging the ROK-US alliance. First of all, to achieve this object, command system should be designed to ensure 'one team, one fight' at operational and tactical level even though the system remains 'two nations, two commands' at the political and strategic level with the wartime OPCON transfer. For a tactical commander conducting maritime operations on scene to perform assigned tasks, unity of effort and unity of command are absolutely necessary. The integrated combat power can not be expected without these factors. Therefore, under the new common operations system, establishment of the command relations is required so that ROK and US Navy can conduct their

assigned missions or tasks in perfect synchronization of all integrated combined and joint forces.<sup>42</sup>

Also, a single OPLAN must be established under the ROK-US common operations system so that ROK and US Navy can efficiently cope with some contingencies such as an all-out war and instabilities in North Korea. In addition to contingencies on the Korean peninsula, it is also necessary for the two navies to develop specific action plans how to cooperate on various international issues such as crises and large-scale natural disasters in the Asia-Pacific region under the name of international cooperation plan. Beforehand, a perfect interoperability between the two navies in the C4I system must be secured to achieve this object. In doing so, real time information sharing and common maritime domain situational awareness are only possible under any circumstances.

In addition, ROK and US Navy should build up various channels for strategic communications between the two separate but complementary commands, and ensure their effective operations by organizing naval

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<sup>42</sup> Some may propose that a dual OPLAN like US-Japan joint operational system can be established between ROK and the US. However, it is important to note that there is a significant difference between the security environment of both countries; ROK is confronting North Korea which has the capability of initiating surprise attack with its nuclear, chemical and biological weapon, and long range artillery while Japan has relatively safe security environment because no urgent threat is present.

operations coordination center, with proper liaison elements and built-in mission procedures.

Finally, ROK and US Navy, on the basis of the ROK-US alliance, should engage PLAN in efforts for regional maritime security.<sup>43</sup> In other words, it is necessary for the two navies to lead PLAN to create 'habits of cooperation.'<sup>44</sup> It can be done either by including PLAN into a trilateral framework of ROK-US-China, or by encouraging it to actively participate in multilateral efforts for world peace and regional maritime security. China's participation can help these international efforts generate real impact for the regional security.

Good examples of such efforts are RIMPAC (Rim of Pacific), Pacific Reach<sup>45</sup> or WP MCDEX (Western Pacific Mine Counter Measure Exercise/ Diving Exercise) in which ROK and US Navy have participated.<sup>46</sup> Also,

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<sup>43</sup> Some might ask if ROK Navy is capable of engaging PLA Navy in the various efforts for regional maritime security. However, since major powers such as the US, Japan, China and Russia don't recognize ROK as a relatively threatening state, ROK, instead, can take the role providing the platform which leads the cooperation among major powers.

<sup>44</sup> Former PACOM Chief Dennis Blair was quoted as suggesting joint military exercises between US and Chinese militaries that would create habits of cooperation. Wendell Minnick, "Habits of Cooperation," *Defense News*, April 30, 2007, p. 6.

<sup>45</sup> In fact, China dispatched its officers as observers for Pacific Reach 2004 training which was led by ROK Navy in May 2004. For more on China's participation as a constructive role in the efforts for multinational submarine rescue, see Lyle Goldstein and William Murray, "International Submarine Rescue: A Constructive Role for China?," *Asia Policy*, No. 5 (January 2008), p. 167-83.

<sup>46</sup> PLAN guided missile frigates participated in the Pakistan-hosted multinational naval exercise, AMAN 07, in the North Arabian Sea, with naval forces from the US and seven other countries. Also, the PLAN and Indian navies held a combined force exercise in the South China Sea and

multinational SLOCs protection training, SAREX (Search and Rescue Exercise) for humanitarian and peace purposes, HA(Humanitarian Assistance) in case of massive natural disasters or MIO(Maritime Interdiction Operation) against pirates or international terrorists at sea are good examples for the purpose of creating 'habits of cooperation'.<sup>47</sup>

Of course, ROK and the US can independently lead China to international cooperative efforts based on their bilateral exchanges with China. As long as the two countries maintain the ROK-US alliance, but, one should respect the other's position. One should not pursue its cooperations with China in ways to cause discord in the alliance. It is desirable, therefore, that they deliver, through thorough information sharing, unified messages to China so that the latter can respond in a way contributive to the ROK-US alliance.

Some people might ask a question about the possibility of China participating in such activities. However, it seems that China will be favorable to these activities for the following three reasons. Firstly, there are many areas in which China needs the cooperation of other countries at sea. For example, China does not possess means to protect SLOCs upon which it highly depends

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PLAN Luhai-class destroyer Shenzhen conducted the PRC's first port visit to Japan. *Military Power of the People's Republic of China 2008*, pp. 5-6.

<sup>47</sup> Co-participation in collaborative anti-piracy operations on the seas off Somalia by ROK, US, and PLA Navy can be an excellent idea.

for the sustainable development and prosperity. Unlike the US Navy, PLAN does not possess overseas networks or logistic infrastructures in support of a long-term operation at the high seas.

Therefore, it has to obtain the support of other countries by participating in multinational naval cooperation activities when/if necessary. Also, although it is operating a number of submarines, China does not have sufficient capabilities nor experiences to rescue its submarines in case of submarine accidents.<sup>48</sup>

Secondly, by participating in these multinational security activities, China expects lots of gains such as directly experiencing state-of-the-art equipment and advanced capabilities of the US Navy or JMSDF(Japan Maritime Self-Defense Force), which are among the best naval forces in the world, and acquiring their expertise.<sup>49</sup>

Lastly, such regional engagement facilitates China to open doors to foreign countries by providing opportunities to perform the appropriate responsibility and role in the international community, suitable to its national power. It can also restrain the potential conflicts at sea by encouraging PLAN to control itself militarily. Moreover, it can be a good opportunity for PLAN to

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<sup>48</sup> For example, there was an accident that Chinese Ming class submarine was sunk with its 70 crews by accident while training at the eastern sea area of Neichang mountain island of the Yellow Sea on 16 April 2003. Lyle Goldstein and William Murray, "International Submarine Rescue: A Constructive Role for China ?," p. 179–80.

<sup>49</sup> Lyle Goldstein and William Murray, "International Submarine Rescue: A Constructive Role for China?," p. 183.

improve transparency, and facilitate confidence building through cooperations with navies in the region. From this context, some claim that the future of regional maritime security depends on how to engage China into the international security system.

## **V. Conclusion**

China is building up its naval capabilities in order, first of all, to be ready for contingencies in the Taiwan strait, and to protect and expand its maritime interests such as maritime spaces, resources, and vital energy routes. In the long-term, China ultimately plans to build a blue-water navy in preparation for competition with the US. Therefore, PLAN's build-up is focused on expanding China's own strategic defense in depth, at the same time, establishing capabilities, through anti-access and area denial forces, to keep US naval forces, especially aircraft carriers, from coming Taiwan's aid in case of Taiwan strait contingencies. PLAN is trying, ultimately and in the long run, to construct a blue-water navy, concomitant with its national power and status as a great power, in preparation for China-US strategic rivalry.

As China currently favors a stable international situation, there does not seem a major impact from the PLAN's build-up in the short run. In the medium and long-term, however, China might endanger regional maritime security and disturb the safety of main SLOCs by raising tension in the Straits of Taiwan,



ultimately challenging US Navy's regional maritime supremacy. In order to prepare for this, ROK and the US need to continuously observe the scope and speed of PLAN build-up and to develop a common approach to China.

On the other hand, ROK needs to ease concerns of China over the strengthening the ROK-US alliance, and to further develop a bilateral relationship with China, increasing mutual cooperation in all areas, such as politics, economy, military and culture. By doing so, ROK can settle North Korean nuclear issues peacefully and, at the same time, establish a foundation for the peaceful reunification of the Korean peninsula. This is also a way to encourage China to play a more positive role, as a responsible stakeholder of the international community.

In conclusion, ROK has the difficult position of making friends with China while also demonstrating a willingness to respond jointly with the US to the rise of China. Under these situations, future cooperations between ROK and US Navy need to focus on the following three areas. First, ROK and US Navy should demonstrate the robustness of the ROK-US combined defense posture in order to prevent China from taking an antagonistic approach towards the ROK-US alliance. Secondly, a new ROK-US naval common operations system should be firmly established, discouraging China from trying to estrange the ROK-US alliance. Finally, ROK and US Navy must jointly strive to engage PLAN in efforts for the regional maritime security, thus providing China with

opportunities to create 'habits of cooperation' as well as to perform the appropriate responsibility and role in the international community, suitable to its national power. (The end)



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